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This book is dedicated to Lord Buddha

For giving meaning and direction in my life

- I'm neither qualified to be a spiritual teacher nor a serious practitioner.
 - I'm a writer who wishes to share my views with you on subjects of mutual interest and listen to yours as a spiritual person.
-

A simple guide to survival philosophy

Introduction

This book is essentially a guidebook for my reference, and I hope it will benefit any layperson who wants to study Indian philosophy. This book is mainly based on Buddhist philosophy and the philosophy of Shankaracharya.

There are so many philosophies from different religions. Each religious group is compartmentalised, believing only their way is the correct way. In reality, all the paths lead to the realisation of '**Paramatma**' (God). Hence, we should take a reconciliatory approach and adopt whatever good things are there in other

religions. This book aims to compile such essential principles for a survival philosophy, not a dogmatic one.

During my service days, I found that while teaching some new ideas to the staff under training, it is best to teach the subject matter in a question-and-answer form. In the modern computer age, all the important instructions are given in the question and answer form. It is the easiest and best way of teaching and learning. So, I have tried to implement this idea in this book, and I have dealt with the subject matter under small headings, which is more like a question-and-answer form. It is helping me to crystallise my ideas, and I hope that it will help the readers also.

Extract of this book

In the computer age, the reading habit of books is drastically reduced. After introducing AI, the AI gives the extract of the issue you are searching for. Now, I feel there is no point in giving elaborate details and giving a conclusion at the last. Hence I would like to give the conclusion at the beginning of the book itself. Modern-day research papers also give the extract at the beginning of the article itself, it makes reading of research papers easier.

What is the final objective of life, as per teachings of Buddha the final objective is “Nirvana”. Nirvana literally means “Nude” but actually it means a happy state of mind, where suffering or happiness is taken neutrally. “Nirvana” is the final objective of this book.

After analysing all the Buddhist principles I realised that Buddhist ideas are exactly opposite to other religions of the world. Then, how to reconcile the differences. Buddha himself answers the “**middle path**”. Do not go into the extreme, take a middle

path that is the final teaching of how to lead a Buddhist way of life. Don't follow extreme ascetic activity at the same time do not practice material indulgence.

So the final objective is “Nirvana” and the pathway is “Middle Path”. Nothing new. Other than what was said by Buddha. I have given the final instruction in the beginning itself. Now, let us go into the details.

Chapter -1

General Issues and Topics

What is the final objective of man's search?

Man is searching for mechanisms for **survival and happiness**. That is the final objective. Accumulating material wealth and power will not bring happiness. Understanding the nature of Atma and Paramatma will bring everlasting joy.

The other way of defining happiness is 'Nirvana'. Nirvana is a neutral state of mind where there is no sorrow. Desire leads to suffering and despair, so try to eliminate cravings and selfishness. The fundamental philosophy of Buddha

The survival philosophy

The survival philosophy is a mixture of Buddhism and Advaita philosophy. Fortunately, India is still a tolerant country where one can boldly express one's opinion (as of 2022). It is not clear how India will turn out in the future. Anyhow, let us hope for the best.

I have named it 'survival philosophy' because I am not bothered about a high level of philosophy, but a philosophy, just enough for the ordinary person to survive. All human beings and animals want to survive. I also want to survive; that is a fundamental biological instinct, nothing wrong with it.

Elephant and six blind men

All of you will know the story of the elephant and four blind men and how they perceived how an elephant would look. Nowadays, young students are so impatient that they assume many things after listening to a single lecture from a philosopher.



A young Hindu philosopher (who has read only one book) starts his lecture by saying that "**Tat Twam Asi**" is the ultimate philosophy that explains everything. Young Buddhists start preaching that "all problems are due to Desire and **Shunya (No-soul)** concept explains everything" Young devotees of Krishna say, "**Karma Yoga and Gynana Yoga**" explain everything. Young Christians say, "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself" is the ultimate preaching of Jesus, and it will solve all the confusion. It is like four blind men trying to figure out an elephant. We should take the best teachings of all these great religions and try to survive in this world.

Elephant in another context

Buddhism frequently mentions about white elephant. The white elephant is supposed to be a reincarnation of Buddha. I don't believe in reincarnation. My interest in elephants is while reading the book 'Dhamma Pada'. This book contains numerous couplets where Buddhist ideas are expressed in a simple way.

Buddha says you should live like a male elephant. The male elephant lives in the forest alone. Only during the breeding season, it joins the herd. Buddha says it is better to live alone like an elephant, rather than living in the company of unholy people.

Another example of an elephant simile is the case of a war elephant. The war elephant is trained to keep its trunk well protected within its armour. If it takes out the trunk out of its armour it may get hurt and not fit to be a war elephant. Similarly, man

also should control his senses, otherwise, he will become a useless person.

Finally, there is some similarity between 'dhamma pada' and Thirukural (Tamil literature). Both books are written in couplet form and talk about moral principles and no god is mentioned. I get the feeling the book 'Thirukural' is the modified version of 'dhamma-pada'.

Four masters of philosophy

Who are the four masters? Krishna (Bhagwat Geetha), Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Aadi Shankaracharya (Advaita philosophy). There are many vital insights said by these four masters. But the fact is that we have to read and understand all these four masters. We must appreciate those sayings and realize their viewpoint to become a complete human being and attain Buddhahood (Buddha Nature).

The first three Alwars

I was always fascinated by the life history of Alwars. There were twelve Alwars in Tamil Nadu (Just like the twelve apostles of Jesus), And their life is described by Tamil Vaishnavites as a perfect example to be emulated.

One thousand years ago, the first three Alwars travelled in a forest near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India: **Pey-Alwar, Bhoothath Alwar, and Poigai Alwar**. They had heard about each other but

had not seen each other. Suddenly, it started to rain because it was the monsoon season, and it was a cyclonic storm. They searched for a shelter, found an old temple, and took refuge. There was no space, and they were sitting close, touching each other. In desperation, they hugged the temple's idol for protection and warmth. At that moment, they felt that there was a fourth person among them who felt his warmth and started praising the happiness in their songs. The fourth person was God; he appeared among them and gave them warmth. It was surprising to them. They practised and preached religious principles for a long time, but God never appeared before them.

But what is the speciality the God appearing at this juncture? They raised the said question to God himself for the answer. God said you were individually practising different aspects of yoga. One was practising Bhakti Yoga, the second was practising Karma Yoga, and the third was practising Gyana yoga. It does not help to practice these yogas separately. All these four yogas should be practised together to attain salvation.

This story is available in the books of the life history of Alwars, and the same story has been re-told by Sadh-guru (Coimbatore) on his website.

Positive thinking theory does not help.

More than 100 books on 'positive thinking' have been written in the past 100 years. Unfortunately, this idea brings about only a cosmetic change, and it does not help in the long run. The only

principle-centred life helps throughout life, as said by **Stephen Covey**. (Covey, 2020)

Seven Habits of Success

Many books in the market put forth the theory of positive thinking. But this philosophy is very shallow rhetoric. Just because you think positively, "I will remain happy always," will not result in a happy life. To remain satisfied, you must follow many good habits, meditation, and an excellent philosophical attitude. Still, you will become old and sick and die.

That is the ultimate fact of human existence, and man should be prepared for it. That realistic attitude towards life should not be termed "**pessimistic**" or negativism. I read so many positive thinking books, which did not help me.

Finally, I had the opportunity to read the book by Stephen Covey. (**Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**). In his book, Covey clarifies that the positive thinking philosophy created by Dale Carnegie and others does not work. Covey says that the philosophy of positive thinking, which has existed for the last 100 years, is very shallow and does not help in the long run. Covey says only fundamental good values and attitude alone will help any person in the long run. The philosophy proposed by Covey is called a "**principle-centred life**" It is a beautiful explanation, and you will benefit from reading that book.

Attitude of gratitude

Being grateful and expressing 'Thankfulness' improves one's life. It brings in happiness and reduces negative feelings.

What is the difference between prayer and meditation?

The answer of sadguru (Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu) is brief and hard-hitting. The answer is 'that *prayer means you are trying to tell God to do something, whereas meditation means you understand your limitations and shut up.*

This brief statement explains the difference between prayer and meditation.

Altruism

Selfishness is not a wise way to find happiness By Matthieu Ricard on March 03, 2014

Matthieu Ricard

Buddhist Monk from France, Humanitarian, Author, and Photographer

Mattieu Ricard says selfishness cannot be regarded as an effective way to love oneself since it is the prime cause of our frustrations and unhappiness. It constitutes a particularly clumsy attempt to secure one's happiness. In line with Buddhist thinking, psychologist Erich Fromm sheds light on selfish behaviour in this

way: "The love of my self is inseparably connected with the love of any other self. Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are opposites. The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; he hates himself." A selfish person is someone who does nothing sensible to be happy. He hates himself because, without realizing it, he does everything possible to make himself unhappy. This permanent failure provokes an internal frustration and rage that he turns against himself and the outer world.

If egocentrism is a constant source of torment, it is pretty otherwise for altruism and compassion. On the level of lived experience, selfless love is accompanied by a profound feeling of fullness. As we will see, the state of mind activates most brain areas linked to positive emotions. One could say that selfless love is the most positive of all positive emotions.

What's more, altruism is in harmony with the reality of what we are and what surrounds us: everything is interdependent. The common perception of our daily life can lead us to believe that things have an objective and independent reality, but they exist only in dependence on other things.

Understanding how much our physical existence, survival, comfort, health, and so on depend on others. And on what the external world provides us — remedies, food, and the like — it grows easier to put ourselves in the place of others, wish for their happiness, respect their aspirations, and feel closely concerned with accomplishing them. Understanding this universal interdependence is the very source of the deepest altruism.

Stopping the mind

The mind works continuously and is a chain of thoughts all the time. There is no respite from this chain of thoughts. If there is a problem, the mind thinks about the situation continuously. But, many times, there are no easy solutions to the difficulties a mind faces. This is the problem of the logical thinking mind.

There are many different kinds of meditation. But some meditations are suitable for stopping the mind. In my personal experience, breathing meditation helps relax and stop the mind. (Walpola, 1974 p. 71) That is regular meditation of watching over inhalation, halation and counting the number of breaths. The mind gradually gets diverted from everyday problems and starts concentrating on counting breaths. It induces sleep invariably in me.

So many burdens on man

Society puts a lot of expectations on a man. He has to fulfil the dreams of his parents, his wife, the organisation, and the community. How will it be possible for a simple monkey (Darwin's evolutionary theory) to meet all these ambitions? That is why a man goes nuts. I used to wonder about so many sanyasis roaming in India. They are victims of over-ambitious parents and wives. Becoming a sanyasi is the only escape route. There is nothing

wrong with this escape mechanism; man has to survive, even after many failures.

So many failures in life

I tried hard to achieve many things in life. Indeed, I gained a few things, but my failures were many. Life is full of desires – at the end of life, man realizes that all his desires fail one by one.

A good friend is like a lifeboat.

Life had been harsh on me because of my ambitions, and I faced many difficulties and failures. I finally achieved my goal of becoming a civil servant, which is a significant achievement. But that was not the end of the story; it was the beginning of another problem. I got Indian Revenue Service (IRS) and joined the academy at NADT, Nagpur.

I tried for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and ended up in the IRS, in which I had no interest. Naturally, I was not too fond of the training and income tax subjects. There was no genuine interest in undergoing rigorous training. Naturally, I failed my Income tax paper in both semesters. It was so shameful, failure in the examination. I never failed any of my studies during my school and college days. So, it was a harrowing experience.

Fortunately, I had one good friend; he also failed in some papers. He only consoled me; failing some examination was not a significant issue. I was surprised to see the feelings of shame

disappear. So, one of the big lessons in my life, is that failure is not a problem; if you have a good friend or relative, your failures will not hurt you. So, try to cultivate and maintain good friends and relatives.

Chapter-2

Evolution of philosophical ideas in the Indian subcontinent

Buddha is the first man to bring philosophical ideas to India. Before that, the Vedic religion relied on sacrifice and rituals. Buddha denied the existence of God, and his philosophy was termed as '**Shunya-philosophy**' (Shunya means Zero) by later-day Hindu revivalists' Shankaracharya'.

Let's see the evolutionary pattern of Hindu philosophical ideas

600 BC	Buddha	Buddha said there is no 'Atma' and no 'Paramatma.' (No-soul theory) (Shunya – theory)
700 AD	Shankaracharya Advaita philosophy	Shankaracharya diluted the ideas of Buddha – he said there is Paramatma but no Atma. His philosophy is colloquially called 'Maya -vadam' (vadam means argument). Which is not accepted by later-day bhakti movement philosophers.

1000 AD	Ramanuja Vishistathvaita philosophy	Ramanuja said Atma and Paramatma are both different, but there is a chance the Atma will reach the Paramatma after attaining 'self-realization.' Or 'bhakti'. Ramanuja further diluted the theory of Shankaracharya.
	Madhvacharya — ----- Dwaita philosophy	Finally, Madhavacharya had fallen back to old ideas; he said Atma and Paramatma are different, and there is no chance that Atma will ever reach Paramatma in this life.

The above table gives some basic idea of India's evolution of religious beliefs. You must build up your concepts by reading more books, whichever you like. Thus, the whole cycle is complete, and Hindus have fallen back to old ideas, completely reversing from Buddhist views. At the same time, Hinduism has been transformed by absorbing Buddhist ideas. We will be seeing those ideas in the following pages.

Now, many religious groups exist at various levels of philosophy. We must analyse all these diverse opinions and adopt whatever idea is helping us. As Hindus and modern Indians, we should tolerate other religious beliefs and work harmoniously.

That is the hard lesson learned by Europeans after those religious wars (thirty years of religious wars in Europe). So let us not

make a mistake and follow a pragmatic approach to survive as a nation and progress. We have to shun the fundamentalist approach and work towards modernity.

Unity in diversity / one book or many books

Ultra-religious people search for meaning in a single book, whereas Hinduism is diverse, with many philosophies within. Yet, people are trying to make a living with it. I was under the impression that Hindus needed a single religious book like Christians and Islamists. It gives unity to religious groups and nations,

But I may have to change that idea. After seeing the violence indulged in by religious extremists, I find that polytheism and many holy books seem to be a good idea.

Accepting many religions and many books is helping modern nations. That is polytheism is helping modern governments. Look for the example of the thirty years war in Europe (1618 -1648). It was one of the most destructive wars in Europe; nearly ten million died due to the conflict between Catholics and protestants. After the treaty of Westphalia and taking a neutral approach towards the religious strife, decades of battle ended, and the countries prospered.

Similarly, the diverse groups and ideas are helping the Indian government to survive. It is easy for the Indian government to control this divided group. Had it been a single religious group, the

religious leaders would try to interfere with the government, and India would have become a theocratic state. The best example is how people are struggling against the tyranny of the theocratic state of Iran (as of 2022)

Modern nations survive on a uniform civil code like the unifying effort of religious groups.

List of books for survival

Life is many-faceted better to have many books to develop a proper understanding of survival philosophy. We cannot have a single book like Christianity/ Islam; it is better to have many books.

When I discuss many books, I am reminded of the burning of Alexandria's library.

The onset of the Dark Age is the sad part of human civilisation. The Dark Ages started with the fall of the Roman Empire around 500 AD. However, some of the characteristics of the Dark Ages could be seen in the earlier period. One such incident happened in Alexandria, Egypt, in 391 A.D.

It was an unfortunate event, and religious zealots started it. Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, burnt the library that year and triggered the great catastrophe. That kind of vandalism resulted in the destruction of all books all over Europe. Which was one of the main reasons for the Dark Ages. Modern-day jihadists are also doing the same thing.

The Bible is not a single book; it is a collection of books from many people. So let us have a minimum list of books for our survival philosophy. The minimum list is given below.

1. Bhagwat Gita
2. Viveka-Choodamani – by Shankaracharya
3. 'What Buddha taught' by Rahula Walpola
4. The Bible – only the New Testament portion.

Exclude Moses's part and the latter-day works of Saint Paul. I mean, **'whatever Jesus said is acceptable to me.'** We have to take a reconciliatory approach towards Christianity because India is the only last refuge of Hindus; if you want to survive, you need support from other religions. Hence a reconciliatory approach to other faiths is the best option.

The above-given list of books is essential; if you want, add more books, whatever you feel like, but don't overload your mind with many books. The light burden is enough.

"Come to me, all weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." ([Matthew 11 verses 28,29,30](#))

that is the correct approach to life; what is the point of carrying a heavy yoke? Let it be lighter.

There is a second list of books which are essential to broaden someone's mind.

1. Gospel of the Buddha----- By Paul Carus.
2. Upanishads – not all Upanishads selected few
2. Happiness -A guide to developing life's most important skill
(By Matthieu Ricard).
3. The seven habits of highly effective people –
(By Stephen Covey).
3. The Dhamma Pada – sayings of Buddha
(similar to Thirukural – Two line poems of Thirukural (Tamil))

Many more books can be added as per your wish.

Understanding India and Hindus

I had great difficulty understanding Hinduism and India. Starting from my college days, I had this question, 'What is Hinduism? And what are the main principles? If I cannot comprehend Hinduism, what will be the plight of any other foreigner in this regard? The first book I read on this issue is by Stanley Wolpert, 'India.' (Wolpert, 1991) Still, I am searching for the meaning of being Hindu and Indian.

My search on India has already yielded two books on Indus Valley civilization – '[New Interpretations on Indus Valley Civilization](#).' The second book is on the issue of the interpretation of the Indus script. The title of the book is '[Indus script dictionary](#).' These books are not merely about the Indus Valley Civilization but also a search for old gods and the Hindu way of life.

Shankaracharya and Advaita philosophy

Shankaracharya was the first person who tried to unify Hindu ideas and somewhat succeeded, yet not entirely successful. His best book is '**Viveka-Choodamani**'; for anyone who wants to understand Hindu philosophy, it is the best book. But still, many staunch Hindus don't accept his Advaita philosophy, Because Buddhist ideas heavily influence Advaita philosophy. Hence Ramanuja calls him '**Prachanna Buddha**' (disguised Buddha). The same is the problem with the Bhagwat Gita; therefore, we will never have a unified religious idea for Hindus, and it is better to live as such. Fortunately, the more profound philosophies do not affect the ordinary person. Poor man's philosophy is only his stomach; if some philosophy gives food, it is the best philosophy. He is not bothered about Advaita or Vishistatvaita philosophy.

Three qualities of men ----Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas

One serious issue has been debated for a long time in the interpretation of Bhagwat Geeta. That is the issue of the class system in Bhagwat Geeta. I was reading the article of shri Pradeep on the website velivada.com. (Pradeep) In this hard-hitting article, he has said about the casteist approach of the Geetha. Yes, it isn't easy to justify many verses that mention different people categories.

The fundamental idea comes from verse no.13 in chapter IV. It says three are four varnas. It looks like; it was a justification of the varna system of Hindus. Some verses justify the old system, yet this book is the best philosophical treatise for Hindus. We have to ignore those negative points and concentrate on sound issues.

Gita generally insists on the three qualities of a person's mind, not the class system. Bhagwat Gita generally insists only on three qualities of men: **Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas**. Sattva means philosophical, spiritual people, Rajas means materialistic people, and Tamas means ignorant people. Hence, a moderate view should be taken on this issue of the casteist approach of Gita, not an outright rejection of Gita.

Many philosophical ideas in Bhagwat Gita will help our lives, and we must ignore some old ideas. Let us take only good things from Geeta, just like *Anna Pakshi*, who drinks only milk and leaves the water. (*Of course, I don't believe there is such a bird, it is only*

a metaphor) if you want to be more scientific, let us take the example of the Flamingo, which filters out the water and mud and only consumes the plankton. So let us be like Flamingo, forget about some aberrations, and take the good philosophical ideas of Geeta.

Yes, I am surprised to see people with these three qualities. A materialistic man believes he will attain happiness by getting more money and power. Once, I was also like that, but gradually my mind turned towards Sattva qualities. This is what the Gita insists on, not on casteist ideas. This is what I believe.

The point to be noted here is that there is no use in lingering with the idea of worldly benefits. Let us turn towards sattvic thoughts, which will give us everlasting happiness.

Three important Yogas

Bhagwat Gita talks about three yogas; they are as follows

BHAKTI YOGA

KARMA YOGA

AND GYANA YOGA

Bhakti yoga is suitable for small children and adolescents, but when a man grows up, he has to practice 'karma yoga'; then only

it will be beneficial to human society and family. Then the last stage is Gyana yoga (Jnana).

There is an interesting conversation between the God Krishna and Arjuna. At one stage, arjuna says, 'Krishna, sometimes, you are telling me that Gyana yoga is the final solution, sometimes you are telling me that karma yoga is good; I am confused; please clearly tell me, which is the way to salvation.'

It is interesting to note that Arjuna is confused about these yogas. But considering the situation, it was the war front, survival at stake. Action is needed; there is no use of bhakti or ghyana yoga at this stage for survival. Only karma yoga is the only way out. So Krishna says that karma yoga is good at this juncture; do carry out the fighting and destroy your enemies.

But, after the war, ghyana yoga is the path. Shankaracharya says many times in his book Viveka-choodamani that karma yoga will not help in 'Mukti'; only Gyana yoga will help release bondage and the passage to mukti.

Small “self” and big “Self”

Another confusing nomenclature is **the small “self”** and **big “Self”**. Some modern Hindu philosophy books come with the word self with a small 's' and a big 'S' (Self). The big self is indicated by the big "S." What are they? The small 'self' means the Atma and

the big self is Paramatma. The Vedantists do not want to use the words Atma and Paramatma for the English-speaking world.

Atma (soul)	Paramatma (God)
Small self	Big self
Soul	Human conscience
consciousness	Super- consciousness

I hope now; you will be able to understand these terminologies. Please note that Adhi Shankaracharya always uses the word 'Atma.' For Shankaracharya, there is no difference between Atma and Paramatma. That is the Advaita philosophy. So while reading the books of Shankaracharya, you should never forget where he mentions 'Atma'; he means 'Paramatma' because Atma and Paramatma are the same according to him.

Six schools of Indian philosophy

The extract is from a Wikipedia article on Hindu philosophy (Wikipedia(Hindu-Philosophy))

Samkhya/ Sankhya Kapila	A strongly dualist theoretical exposition of consciousness and matter. Agnostic in respect of God or the gods.
Yoga Patanjali	A monotheistic school that emerged from Sankhya and emphasized the practical use of Sankhya theory: meditation, contemplation, and liberation
Nyāya or logic –	The school of epistemology explores sources of knowledge.
Vaiśeṣika –	An empiricist school of atomism.
Purva- Mīmāṃsā Jaimini	An anti-ascetic and anti-mystics school of orthopraxy. This school deals with the correct interpretation of the verses in the Vedas.
Vedanta Shankaracharya	Vedanta forms the last segment of knowledge in the Vedas. (Section of knowledge). Vedanta is also referred to as Uttara-Mimamsa. Vedānta came to be the dominant current of Hinduism in the post-medieval period.

The Ramakrishna Mission and Chinmaya mission follow the Vedanta philosophy; Buddhism falls under a separate category of Heterodox religion, which does not accept the existence of Atma or Paramatma.

Five aggregates (Skanda)

The five aggregates or heaps of clinging are:

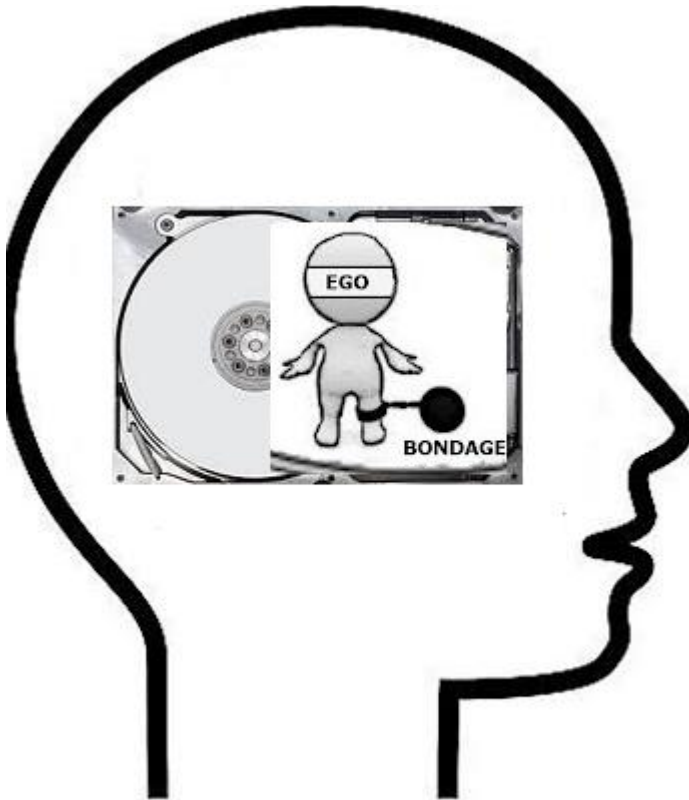
1. form (or material image, impression) (*Rupa*) (five sense organs -eyes, nose, ear, mouth, skin)
2. sensations (or feelings, received from form) (*Vedana*)
3. perceptions (*samjna*)
4. mental activity or formations (*Sankhara*)
5. consciousness (*vijnana*).^{[5][6][7]}

In the Theravada tradition, suffering arises when one identifies with or clings to the aggregates. This suffering is extinguished by relinquishing attachments to aggregates. The Mahayana tradition asserts that the nature of all aggregates is intrinsically empty of independent existence.
(Wikipedia(Skandha))

These are the five sense organs and sensations based on which man operates. These sense organs and sensations give the false idea of 'I and mine.'

Five skandhas are mentioned only in Viveka Choodamani not in the Bhagwat Gita.

Atma and Paramatma - explained.



Now, in modern times we have to explain everything based on the functioning of a computer or cell phone, and then this new generation will be able to understand the concept. No use of old metaphors. We have to use modern metaphors.

It is time to understand the brain's functioning, mind, and ego. The human brain is a biological computer; it works marvellously like a computer. The **brain is the hard disk**, and with memory, memory is the mind. The mind contains the primary

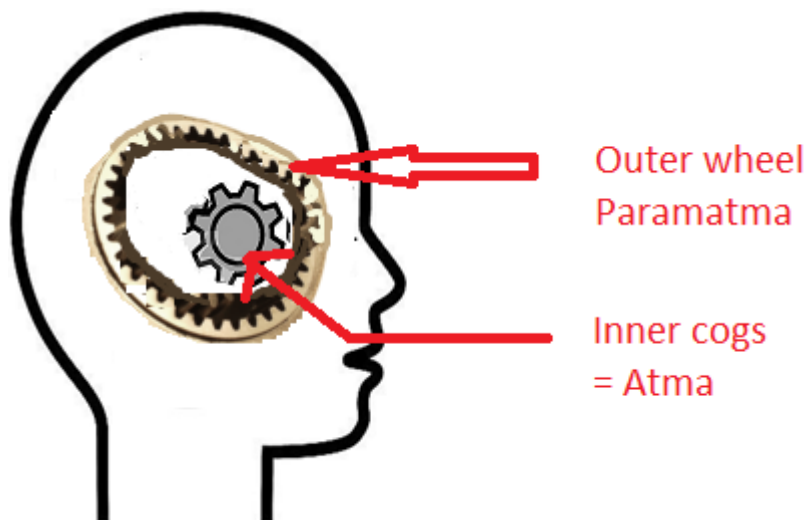
operating system (Equal to the **human conscience**), similar to M.S. operating systems like (Windows 10). The "**little man**" inside the computer is your "**EGO**," which is similar to the applications software programs loaded into your mind (like M.S. Word and M.S. Paint, or Firefox or Google Chrome) (like '**apps**' in the Android cellphone).

Now, there are two persons inside your mind (Brain). One is the human conscience (Paramatma) and the second person is your ego (Atma). Now, these two persons should work together; any conflict between these two persons will result in psychological disorders.

This idea is explained by Kato-Upanishad as two birds sitting in a tree. While one bird is eating the fruits of the tree the other bird is not eating anything and remains as a mere spectator. The little hungry bird is your ego and the other silent bird is the human conscience (Paramatma=God) (details follow).

Finally, the little man (Your ego) is in bondage, bonded to desires. As long as the little man is in bondage, man will be unhappy; the man should try to get liberated from this bondage to attain happiness.

Atma and Paramatma



Atma	Paramatma
The inner cog indicates the soul (ego) in the above-given picture.	Human conscience (The outer Wheel is equivalent to Paramatma)

Earlier, I have given the example of a computer hard disk to explain the mind. That is for electronics engineers. Now, for mechanical engineers, the mind is explained as two cogs. Now,

the inner cog should operate smoothly within the outer wheel; otherwise, your mind will not work correctly. If the O.S. is corrupted, it will not work correctly. The problem with people with extremist ideas is that their O.S. system itself is corrupted. It won't be easy to repair it. It can be corrected only by fundamentally updating their fundamental beliefs about life, attitude, religion, and other values.

Jivatma and Paramatma compared to birds

In the Katopanishad, Mundaka, and Svetasvatara, the Upanishads use the analogy of two birds in a tree to explore the relationship between the individual self (jivatma) and the Supreme soul (Paramātmā):



The individual self (jivatma)

Picture courtesy (Vivekavani.com)

Represented by one bird, the jivatma is a combination of the human and divine. The jivatma is attached to the world and clings to it through a lack of self-awareness. When the jivatma becomes distracted by sensual pleasures, it forgets the Lord and tries to

enjoy the fruit independently. This forgetfulness is called *mahamaya*, or spiritual death, and it causes the *jivatma* to fall into the world of material birth, disease, old age, and death.

The Supreme soul (Paramātmā)

Represented by the other bird, *Paramātmā* is one of the many aspects of Brahman, the Universal Self. *Paramātmā* is situated in the core of every individual *jivatma* and accompanies every living being in the heart. *Paramātmā* is beyond sensual pleasure and is the support of all beings. In the analogy, *Paramātmā* observes the *jivatma* as a witness (*sākṣin*) of its friend's actions.

People search for *Paramatma* somewhere, but both *Atma* and *Paramatma* are inside your brain. Because of these two persons inside your head only, you get conflicting ideas on any given problem or issue you face. Some say your conscience guides you in conflicting moments; that conscience is the outer ring wheel in the above-given picture.

If you search for *Paramatma* (God) somewhere in a temple (or) somewhere outside, you will remain unhappy because he (God) is not out anywhere but within you. It is within your mind that realization gives you absolute freedom and absolute happiness. That is the *Advaita* philosophy.

What are the teachings of Bhagwat Gita?

The Bhagavad Gita explores the relationship between superconsciousness and consciousness, emphasizing the journey towards self-realization and enlightenment. It teaches that the superconscious mind, often associated with higher states of awareness and spiritual insight, can guide and elevate ordinary consciousness. This aligns with the idea that understanding one's true self leads to a more profound existence, as highlighted by various psychological frameworks, including Maslow's theories on self-actualization.

In the Bhagavad Gita, consciousness is a central theme that is intricately woven into the philosophical and spiritual teachings of the text. Here are the key aspects of the concept of consciousness as presented in the Gita:

Atman (Self): The Gita teaches that the true essence of an individual is the Atman, which is the eternal, unchanging self. It is distinct from the physical body and the mind, representing pure consciousness.

Three Gunas: The text discusses the three qualities (gunas) of nature—Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (ignorance)—that influence human behaviour and consciousness.

A balanced or elevated state of Sattva leads to higher consciousness, while the dominance of Rajas and Tamas can obscure true awareness.

Karma and Dharma: Consciousness in the Gita is also tied to action (karma) and duty (dharma). It emphasizes performing one's duty with a sense of detachment, which helps elevate consciousness and align it with divine principles.

Meditation and Self-Realization: The Gita advocates for meditation (dhyana) as a means to transcend ordinary consciousness and connect with the universal consciousness. Through meditation, one can go beyond the mind and realize the unity of Atman with Brahman (the ultimate reality).

Equanimity: Krishna teaches that a person with a steady mind, who remains unattached to success or failure, can achieve a state of higher consciousness. This state of equanimity allows one to perceive reality more clearly, beyond dualities.

Divine Vision: The Gita describes the concept of divine vision (divya drishti), where a practitioner, through disciplined practice

and surrender to God, can see beyond the physical realm and experience higher spiritual truths.

In summary, consciousness in the Bhagavad Gita is multifaceted, encompassing the journey of realizing one's true self, understanding the nature of reality, and achieving spiritual liberation. The teachings encourage individuals to cultivate a higher state of awareness through self-awareness, duty, and devotion.

Maslow's theory of self-realization

Maslow's theory on self-realization is predominantly encapsulated in his concept of self-actualization, which he describes as the highest level of psychological development in his hierarchy of needs. Here are the key points regarding self-actualization according to Maslow:

1. Hierarchy of Needs:

Maslow proposed a five-tier hierarchy of needs, often depicted as a pyramid, consisting of:

Physiological Needs: Basic physical requirements (food, water, shelter).

Safety Needs: Security, stability, and freedom from fear.

Love and Belongingness: Social needs like relationships, love, and belonging.

Esteem Needs: The need for self-esteem, respect, and recognition.

Self-Actualization: The realization of one's potential, personal growth, self-fulfilment, and peak experiences.

2. Definition of Self-Actualization:

Self-actualization refers to the desire to become the most that one can be. It's about realizing personal potential and seeking personal growth and peak experiences. People who are self-actualized feel fulfilled and have a greater sense of purpose.

3. Characteristics of Self-Actualized Individuals:

According to Maslow, self-actualized people often exhibit certain traits, including:

Autonomy: Independent thinking and behaviour.

Purpose: A clear focus on their goals and values.

Realism: A realistic approach to life and acceptance of themselves and others.

Problem-Solving: The ability to prioritize problems outside themselves and get things done.

Acceptance: Acceptance of themselves and others as they are.

Continued Growth: A desire for continued personal development and a willingness to embrace new experiences.

4. Peak Experiences:

Maslow also talked about "peak experiences," which are profound moments of happiness and fulfilment that often accompany self-actualization. These experiences can lead to increased insights, creativity, and a deeper understanding of life.

5. Path to Self-Actualization:

Self-actualization is seen as a lifelong process that involves personal exploration, the confrontation of self-limitations, and the pursuit of personal goals. It requires fulfilling lower-level needs first before one can truly focus on self-actualization.

In essence, Maslow's theory emphasizes that self-actualization is about the pursuit of personal growth, authenticity, and the realization of one's potential. It underscores that true fulfilment comes not from external achievements alone but from inner development and understanding of one's place in the broader context of existence.

Search for diamond

A long time back, I read a story, you could have also read this story, but I could not understand that story at that young age. Now I understand that story;

there was a farmer in Persia a long time ago who wanted to become rich, and somebody said, "If you find diamonds, you will become rich within your lifetime" He sold his land and went in search of diamonds all over the world, but he could not find it. Later he returned to his village, tired of life and everything. He started living on his farm and started to plough the land once again. There the miracle happened; he found big diamonds in his field. What a fate! He was searching for diamonds worldwide, but it was always in his field.

What is the moral of this story? Now do not take it literally. The moral of the story is that our mind is the field containing diamonds; search your mind for diamonds. Search your mind for life satisfaction. If you search outside for more money, wealth, and power, you will be defeated and disappointed; that is the moral of the story.

Perfectionism

I wanted to be a hundred per cent perfect man. That is not possible, and it leads to unhappiness. I believe in Darwin's theory.

Man has evolved from a monkey, and this world has no perfect monkey. So be happy with your partial perfectionism (say 50% perfection?)

Perfectionism is often seen as a positive trait that increases your chances of success, but it can lead to self-defeating thoughts or behaviours that make it harder to achieve goals. It may also cause stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. People who strive for perfection out of feelings of inadequacy or failure may find it helpful to speak with a therapist; this can often help people manage excessive self-criticism. (Good Therapy)

Selfishness leads to unhappiness.

I was searching the internet for some information on the above-given topic. I was surprised to see the contradicting opinion on this issue. One person has vigorously defended that selfishness is a positive quality. But I feel otherwise that selfishness leads to unhappiness.

Selfishness is not a wise way to find happiness By Matthieu Ricard on March 03, 2014

Matthieu Ricard

Buddhist Monk, Humanitarian, Author, and Photographer (Ricard)

Selfishness cannot be regarded as an effective way to love oneself since it is the prime cause of our frustrations and unhappiness. It constitutes a particularly clumsy attempt to secure one's happiness. In line with Buddhist thinking, psychologist Erich Fromm sheds light on selfish behaviour in this way: "The love of my self is inseparably connected with the love of any other self. Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are opposites. (Ricard) The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; he hates himself." A selfish person is someone who does nothing sensible to be happy. He hates himself because, without realizing it, he does everything possible to make himself unhappy. This permanent failure provokes an internal frustration and rage that he turns against himself and the outer world. (Ricard)

If egocentrism is a constant source of torment, it is pretty otherwise for altruism and compassion. On the level of lived experience, selfless love is accompanied by a profound feeling of fullness. As we will see, the state of mind activates most brain areas linked to positive emotions. One could say that selfless love is the most positive of all positive emotions.

What's more, altruism is in harmony with the reality of what we are and what surrounds us: everything is interdependent. The common perception of our daily life can lead us to believe that things have an objective and independent reality, but they exist only in dependence on other things. (Ricard)

Understanding this universal interdependence is the very source of the deepest altruism. Understanding how much our physical existence, survival, comfort, health, and so on depend on others. And on what the external world provides us — remedies, food, and the like — it grows easier to put ourselves in the place of others, wish for their happiness, respect their aspirations, and feel closely concerned with accomplishing them. (Ricard)

Chapter -3

How to meditate?

'Meditation' or mental culture: Bhavana

What is the word used by Buddhists for 'meditation'? Rahula Walpola says that it was called '**Bhavana**.' People think 'meditation' is some technique of breathing in and out, which will lead to Nirvana. It is incorrect, and meditation is a lot of character development, which leads to peace and happiness. Bhavana means culture or development. It aims to clean the mind of

impurities, disturbances, and other ill feelings. Leading finally to joy, happiness, tranquillity, and finally to Nirvana. (Page -67,68; Chapter -VII of Book of Rahula Walpola) (Walpola, 1974)

Two primary forms of meditation

There are two classes of meditations, which are as follows

1. Development of mental concentration (old Hindu method)
2. Vipassana – (Skt. **Vipassana**) (Buddhist method)

The first one is the development of mental concentration (Samadhi), of one-pointedness of mind (Skt. **cittaikagrata**), leading to the highest mystic state. Buddha said such a mystic state is called Samkhata (artificially constructed, mind-produced, conditioned), which is not stable; this kind of meditation existed even before Buddha. (Walpola, 1974)

The second type of meditation was developed by Buddha, known as Vipassana, insight into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of the mind, to the realization of the ultimate Truth, Nirvana. It is an analytical method based on mindfulness, awareness, vigilance, and observation. (Walpola, 1974)

Buddhist meditation can be further divided into five major types, and they are as follows:

- A. mindfulness meditation (Or) awareness meditation
- B. Meditation on living in the present moment
- C. meditation concerning all our sensations or feelings
- D. Investigation and research into various problems of doctrine – religious, ethical, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of Buddhist doctrines (Walpola, 1974 pp. 74,75)

Out of the four prescribed meditation methods, I followed the fourth type (Meditation type -D). I used to analyse one by one all the doctrines of Buddha. It is a kind of analytical method that investigates and researches various problems of philosophy, which covers all aspects of the Buddhist canon. The way of the analytical approach is as given below:

count one by one all four noble truths of Buddha

whenever you want to relax or when you are troubled –

count one by one all four noble truths – twenty points

first, it may take – half an hour – later, it may be quick, just fifteen minutes –

just counting these truths of Buddha will give you great relief to your mind and stability in your mind

that is what I call my meditation

you can do this small meditation any number of times

I used to count (meditate) like this 10 or 15 times per day – that is, whenever a troubled thought arises.

Now, it is gradually reduced to four or five times

Read the book – what Buddha taught – by Rahula Walpola – whenever you are troubled and agitated- it is the best book I have ever read – it will gradually stabilize your mind

People read the Bible daily – my Bible is the only book of Rahula Walpola – it has given me stability in life and happiness

The first truth is man is made of five aggregates (Skandhas)

All are perishable- nothing remains everlasting – why do you bother about this body and mind, which is perishable and survives for few years? Your 'ego' is a small programme in your brain, just like a small 'App' on your cell phone. So, why do you bother about the minor programme? (ego)

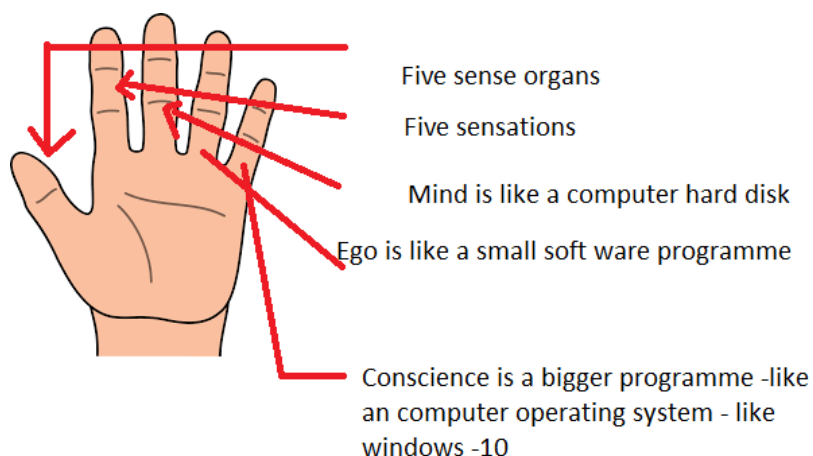


Figure 1: First truth - five aggregates.

The first truth deals with the definition of 'Atma'. What is the conclusion of Buddha? All five aggregates are perishable, and nothing remains after your death. No 'Atma' to carry forward your legacy. Then, why bother so much about your feelings, ego, achievements, property and legacy?

After death, it is complete emptiness, later day Shankaracharya defined it as the '**shunya**' theory, with negative connotations. It was not negative as portrayed by Shankaracharya; after Shunya, there is a tenth and final stage: absolute compassion, gratitude and forgiveness. In the last stage, man attains divine status. (more information available about the tenth stage in the following chapters)

The second truth – reasons for suffering

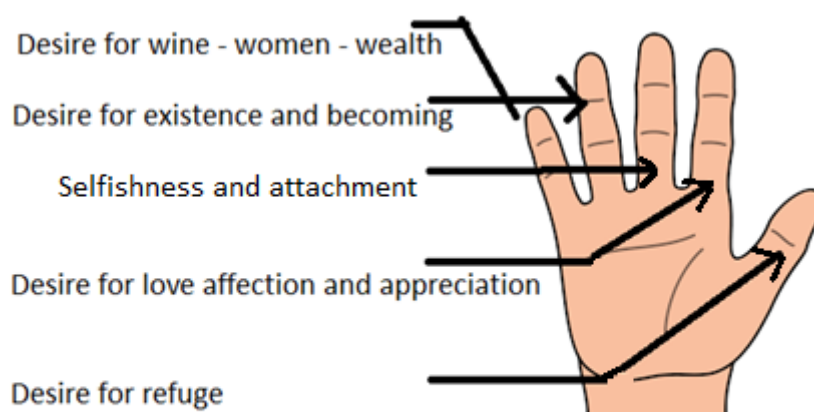


Figure 2: Second Truth - reasons for suffering.

The second truth deals with reasons for suffering. In India, a simple phrase explains the concept, '**desire is the root cause of all suffering.**' Identify your desires, one by one, as shown in the picture.

The first finger shows the three '**www**', not the world wide web; it is the wine, women and wealth; the desire for these three pleasures causes immense suffering.

The second finger indicates the desire for **existence and becoming**. The desire for survival and existence is ingrained in our minds and has evolved over millions of years of the existence of living beings. Darwin's theory of '**survival of the fittest**' explains this concept very well. We can fight against the basic human instinct for survival. We can take a moderate view and understand the desire for survival.

The other idea covered here is the desire for '**becoming**'. 'Becoming' means the desire to achieve money, wealth, popularity, and political power and the desire to accomplish in business, profession, and office working environment. All these desires lead to immense suffering. Leaving all these things may be difficult in the beginning stage of meditation, but take a moderate view. If the problem persists, give up all these desires one by one.

The third finger shows attachment to the father, mother, sister, brother, wife, daughter, son and even dogs and cats. All these attachments lead to suffering. Like all impermanent things, these relationships are also impermanent, and attachment causes immense suffering. Take the '**middle path**' to be optimum in your desire.

The fourth finger shows the expectations of love, affection and appreciation from friends relatives and spouses. It is another instrument for survival; this instinct is also powerful. As said earlier, take a moderate expectation your disappointment may be reduced.

The fifth finger shows the desire for refuge. Desire to take shelter under someone powerful enough to protect and provide for you. Young children and adolescents depend on parents as a refuge. It is a beautiful feeling, no fear, no anxiety, absolute sanctuary. After the death of parents, there is no refuge for man.

In reality, there is 'no refuge' for man. Buddha said, 'make yourself your refuge' and don't depend on others. It was his final message on his deathbed.

If you reduce or mitigate these desires, there will be absolute bliss, called '**nirvana**'.

The third truth – Relief from suffering – Nirvana

What is Nirvana? Nirvana is a happy state of mind- where there is no desire, hatred, or illusion.

The third truth is about relief from suffering. It is eliminating the desires one by one, said in the second truth, or taking a moderate view of your desires. Once the root cause of the problem is understood, it is easy to remove those suffering.



Figure 3: Third truth - relief from suffering - Nirvana.

The above-given third truth shows the way to relief from suffering. The first finger shows the way to '**nirvana**'. With no desire, no attachment, no expectation and no hatred. We have already seen the first three desires in the earlier paragraph.

What is new here is the hatred. Hatred towards someone is worse than desire. Hate has to be eliminated at any cost. That is why the Bible insists on forgiveness many times. Hinduism also mentions forgiveness, but it is not highlighted.

Read the story killing of Shisupal by Krishna. Krishna forgave shisupal 99 times but finally killed him when he offended Krishna 100th time. It is the idea of forgiveness, but Hindus do not understand and follow the psychological principle behind this story.

Another point said here is the illusion. Man is deluded by illusion, and it leads to suffering. For example, I believed God would protect me if I were righteous. It was a delusion, and God did not come to save me in difficult times. It is better to be in real-time to know that you have to manage the consequences of your actions. You have to find ways to protect yourself. God does not help directly; he helps through other righteous men. Just live the righteous path; some other righteous man will help you. The illusion of God does not help.

Similarly, forgiveness, God does not forgive your mistakes. There is no sin in Buddhist ideas; only ignorance leads to errors. If you pray for forgiveness from God, there will be no forgiveness, but be a reformed man, regret the error, take a new stand, and wash away the mistake by doing good things for society, just like thondar-adi-podiyalwar. The second finger indicates the idea that 'truth is nirvana'. The final objective of a sadaka (aspirant for

salvation) (mumutshu) is Nirvana. Nirvana means 'nude'. Because of this misunderstood idea, many ascetics follow absolute 'physical nakedness' as a sign of enlightenment. I don't think it is the correct approach. As the second truth says, Nirvana means removing all your desires and attachments. Nirvana is a neutral state of mind in which you are neither pleased about happy feelings nor sad about harmful incidents. Such a person is called 'sthatha prangyan' (man of stable mind) in the Bhagwat Gita.

Buddha says to follow the truth; you will be delivered with 'nirvana.' It looks possible; ascertain and obey the truth; do not cling to falsehood. Your life will gradually improve, and you will reach 'nirvana'.

The third finger indicates the qualities of compassion, gratitude and forgiveness. These are godly qualities; this is the last and tenth stage of human development. I have given a detailed explanation for this idea already.

The fourth truth is the eight-fold pathway.

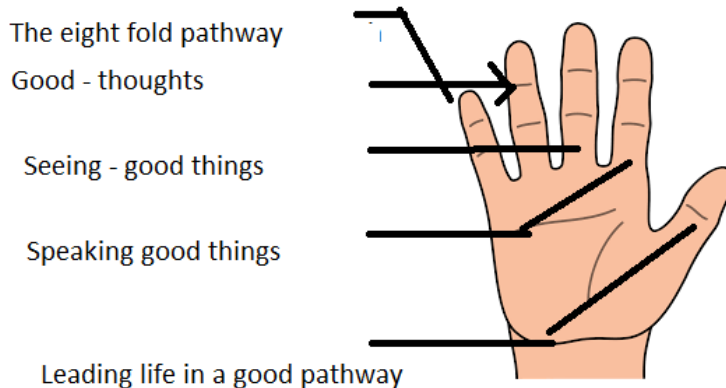


Figure 4: Fourth truth - eight-fold pathway.

The fourth and last truth is the eight-fold pathway. It directs one aspirant to follow good thinking, see good things, speak about good issues and walk in a good direction. Refer to any standard book on Buddhism to learn about the eight-fold pathway.

Just follow the middle path – don't take an extreme stand. Extreme stand on one side enjoying the sense of pleasure to the maximum extent, the other end extreme asceticism. Buddha said to reject both ways, be moderate and pursue your goal of enlightenment.

There are other meditations too.

Meditation on the sense pleasures –

This type of meditation falls under – type -C. meditation concerning all our sensations or feelings

– I live in a forest area near Kodaikanal, a hill station. During my morning walk, I count the sense pleasures –

eyes – it is the beautiful scene – mountain and greenery

nose – the fresh smell of flowers and vegetation

mouth – the taste of fresh fruits

ears – the sound of chirping of birds

skin – cool fresh air of the mountain

it is sometimes necessary to enjoy the sensory pleasure of nature, not sexual pleasure (Avoid it, please, as a monk); by concentrating on these sense pleasures, you realise that the desire for these pleasures leads to misery.

Meditations on feelings

(Falls under category – type-c meditation)

Men are affected by feelings, and what feelings affect my mind? I lived in the capital of Tamil Nadu state Chennai (metro city). I was living under crowded conditions affected my mood and feelings. I wanted to escape from that crowded condition at any cost. So I preferred to live in a forest, far away from the maddening city life.

Count your blessings -meditation.

These are the following problems I escaped from

small living space (small apartment)

the hot, humid climate of Chennai,

salt water for bathing and washing clothes,

dust of metropolis,

hate-filled neighbours,

problematic relatives,

car parking problems,

traffic jams, abusive motorists and road rage,

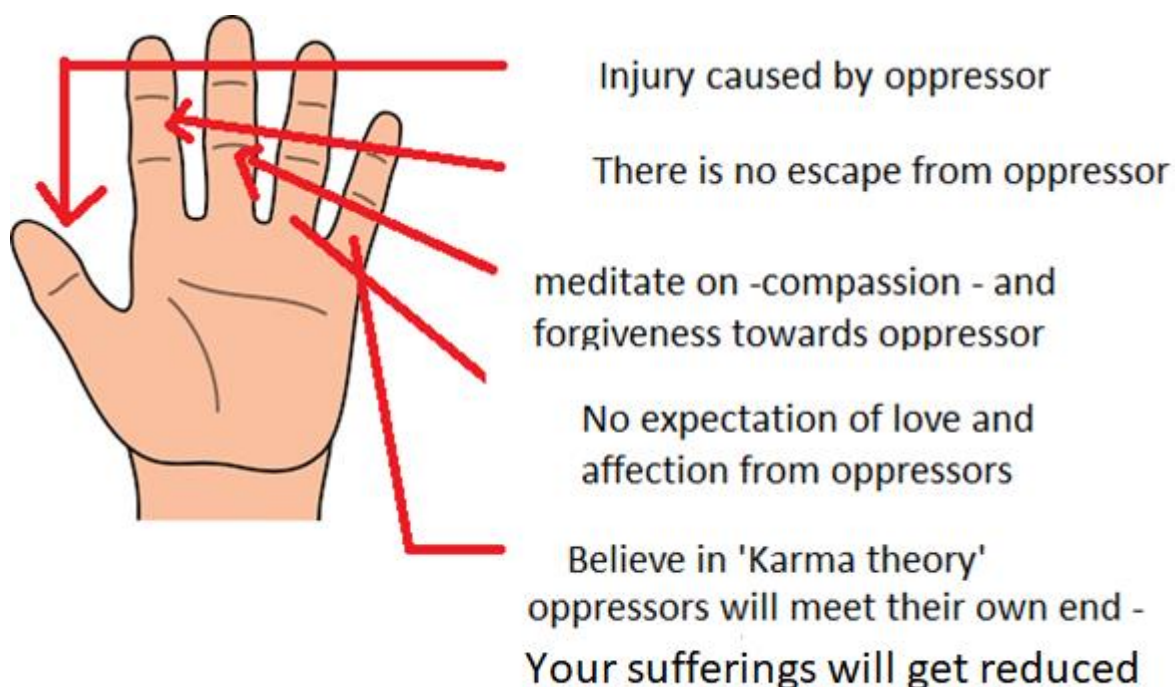
smelly, sewage-filled Cooum river of Chennai,

pathetic slums of Chennai.

These are the ten things I disliked in Chennai, and I got relief from all these problems. A significant achievement, I meditate about this grand escape and feel happy about it. Similarly, count your blessings to enhance your happiness.

Meditation on the person who affected you most in your life

Think about Dalai Lama, he escaped from communists, but many ordinary monks could not escape. Many died and are still dieing. What could be the feeling of Dalai lama toward Chinese communists, absolute hatred? No, he had forgiven and showed compassion to his enemies also. Harboursing hatred only affects your own life. Better to forgive and forget. This is the way we have to live also.



Escaping from the oppressor is very difficult. The only way is to show love and affection to him. That is the only way you can escape from hatred. Hatred is more harmful than desire. To show love and affection you should practice 'forgiveness'. Compassion and forgiveness are the two sides of the same coin.

The desire for love, affection, and appreciation

Many people appear to be living but internally dead but physically alive. They are psychologically dead people. If a person does not show **compassion, gratitude, and forgiveness** to other human beings, he is essentially dead.

Many a time, you will come across such people. It is better to sideline them, treating them as '**Living Dead**' and proceed further in your life. It wastes time, expecting love, affection, and appreciation from dead people. These people show a Narcissistic mentality (lack of empathy, extreme selfishness). These people are so self-centred they do not bother about the feelings and needs of other people. Expecting love, affection, and appreciation from these heartless people leads to disappointment and unhappiness. So better ignore them as 'living dead.'

Desire for refuge

Human beings have many desires and expectations, leading to unhappiness. The desire for refuge is one of the strong desires of human beings. It also leads to despair. As long as one's parents are alive, they are a refuge for a young person. But after the parent's death, there is no refuge for a person. If somebody desperately searches for a sanctuary, he will be disappointed in his life.

Later, the Buddhists diluted the idea and said to take refuge in Buddha, his dharma, and Sanga. Even though it is a diluted

idea, it is better to have some idea of refuge. Because of this reason only, Buddha said, you make yourself own refuge. But absolute independence comes with taking refuge in one's mind.

Cyclical thoughts

Man gets trapped in a cyclical thought; breaking out of that cycle will be difficult. (Page -113, Happiness, Matthieu Ricard). (Ricard, 2015) Mathieu suggests that one should find out the problem through meditation and break out of this deadly cycle to attain happiness and progress.

If there is a problem in somebody's life, the mind thinks about the issue to find a solution. The mind gets trapped like a computer and stalled if there is no solution. There is no escape from such a stalled computer. The only way out is to switch off the computer and reboot the computer. The human mind is also like that; it gets stalled; even if you reboot, it will get stalled. The only way out is to remove the virus from the computer and remove the thought from your mind.

How to remove the virus (thought) from your mind? Specific bad experiences cannot be removed from the mind. Only mitigating the painful events is the solution. Buddha suggests meditation to find the root cause of your psychological problem and give a proper antidote to that psychological problem. Buddha is a great doctor and psychologist who gave medicine for psychological issues. In many statues (Iconography), Buddha is

depicted as a medicine man carrying an ointment in a cup in his hand. He remains a great psychologist in the modern-day also.

Shunya theory

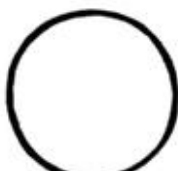
Shankaracharya attacked Buddhism by stating it was a 'pessimistic philosophy' and named it 'Shunya philosophy'. There are ten stages in philosophical development as per 'zen philosophy'. The ninth stage is Shunya philosophy, but the tenth and final one shows compassion, gratitude and forgiveness for others. The tenth stage is the final culmination of philosophical development.

Shankaracharya had taken this tenth stage as godly status and formed his Advaita philosophy that 'you and god are one.'

Shankaracharya has taken all the ideas from Buddhism, yet drove the death nail on Buddhism, arguing that there were no unique thoughts in Buddhism, and already all the ideas are available in Vedic literature that is mainly 'Upanishads.'

Ten Bulls or Ten Ox Herding Pictures

Ten ox herding pictures are a series of short poems and accompanying drawings used in the Zen tradition to describe the stages of a practitioner's progress toward enlightenment and their return to society to enact wisdom and compassion.



Ten Bulls (by Tokuriki Tomikichiro, 1902–99).

The calf, bull, or ox is one of the earliest similes for meditation practice. It comes from the Maha Gopalaka Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 33). It is also used in the commentaries, especially the one on the Maha Satipatthana Sutta (Digha Nikaya 22) and the Satipatthana Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 10). As Buddhism spread throughout South-East Asia, the simile of the bull spread with it.

Famous versions

The best-known version of the ox herding pictures was drawn by the 12th-century Chinese Rinzai Chán (Zen) master Kuòān Shīyuǎn, who also wrote accompanying poems and introductory words attached to the drawings. In Kuòān Shīyuǎn's version, there is no whitening process, and his series also doesn't end with mere emptiness or absolute truth but shows a return to the world, depicting **Putai**, the laughing Buddha. In Japan, Kuòān Shīyuǎn's version gained wide circulation, the earliest one probably belonging to the fifteenth century.



1. In Search of the Bull

In the pasture of the world,
I endlessly push aside the tall.
Grasses in search of the Ox.
Following unnamed rivers,
lost upon the interpenetrating
paths of distant mountains,
My strength is failing, and my vitality is exhausted; I cannot find the
Ox.



2. Discovery of the Footprints

Along the riverbank, under the trees,

I discover footprints.

Even under the fragrant grass,

I see his prints.

Deep in remote mountains, they are found.

These traces can no longer be hidden.



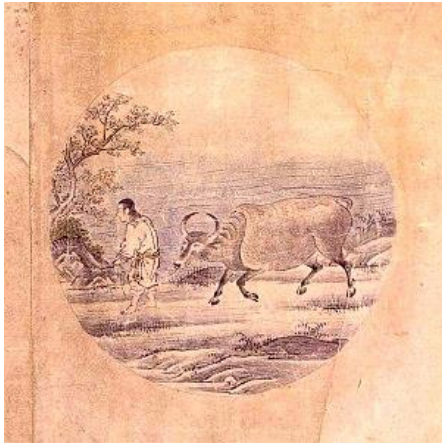
3. Perceiving the Bull

I hear the song of the nightingale.
The sun is warm; the wind is mild,
Willows are green along the shore -
Here no Ox can hide!
What artist can draw that massive head,
Those majestic horns?



4. Catching the Bull

I seize him with a terrific struggle.
His great will and power
Are inexhaustible.
He charges to the high plateau.
far above the cloud mists,
Or, in an impenetrable ravine, he stands.



5. Taming the Bull

The whip and rope are necessary,
 Else he might stray off down.
 Some dusty road.
 Being well-trained, he becomes
 Naturally gentle.
 Then, unfettered, he obeys his master.



6. Riding the Bull Home

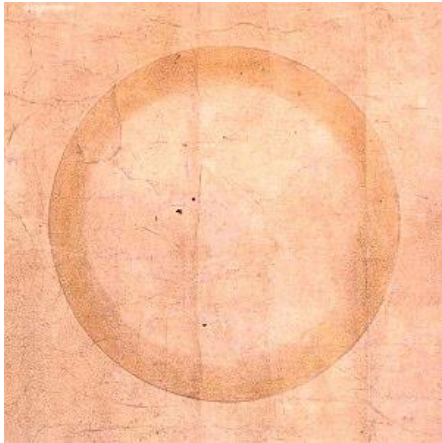
Mounting the Ox, slowly
 I return homeward.
 The voice of my flute intones

Through the evening.
 Measuring with hand-beats
 the pulsating harmony,
 I direct the endless rhythm.
 Whoever hears this melody
 Will join me.



7. The Bull Transcended

Astride the Ox, I reach home.
 I am serene. The Ox, too, can rest.
 The dawn has come. In blissful repose,
 Within my thatched dwelling
 I have abandoned the whip and ropes.



8. Both Bull and Self Transcended

Whip, rope, person, and Ox -

All merge in No Thing.

This heaven is so vast,

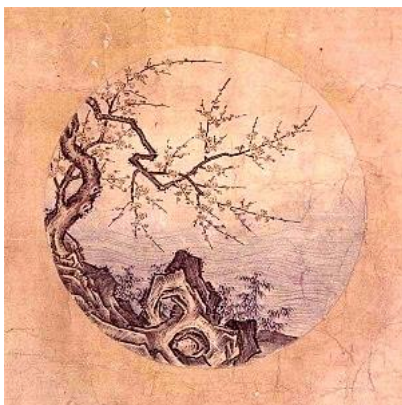
No message can stain it.

How may a snowflake exist

In a raging fire.

Here are the footprints of

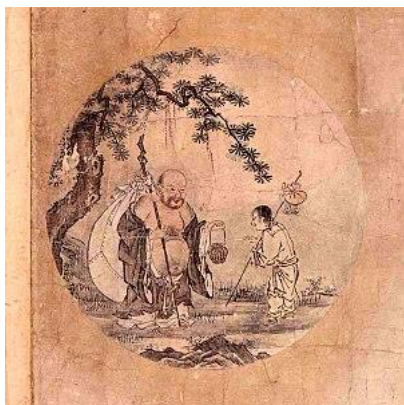
The Ancestors.



9. Reaching the Source

Too many steps have been taken.

Returning to the root and the source.
 Better to have been blind and deaf
 From the beginning!
 Dwelling in one's true abode,
 unconcerned with and without -
 The river flows tranquilly on
 And the flowers are red.



10. Return to Society

Barefooted and naked of breast,
 I mingle with the people of the world.
 My clothes are ragged and dust-laden,
 And I am ever blissful.
 I use no magic to extend my life;
 Now, before me, the dead trees
 Become alive.

Chapter - 4

My journey

My first success with Buddhist ideas

I was unhappy for a long time, but I could not find out why. The unhappiness started during my higher studies and preparation for the civil service examination in New Delhi. The preparation was long and strenuous, and it took six years to get the first civil service job. The long period of stress put me into unexplained unhappiness. I tried all religious ideas and practices. Finally, Buddhist ideas helped in relieving my pain.

In the beginning, I did not know about meditation practices., I read the books of Buddhist ideas, which itself relieved my long-time problem of unhappiness. I had the great idea of success through achievements and gaining a lot of money and properties. But practically nothing was coming. The government's salary was just enough for food and shelter. Where to think about a property?

First, I gave up any desire to gain money and desire for property. Just, I lived a hand-to-mouth existence, just survival. That made a dramatic change in my life; my long-time unhappiness disappeared. Thanks to Buddha.

The second period of unhappiness

The first period of happiness lasted ten years; I did not think about money or wealth, just concentrating on the job. This period of joy lasted for ten years, and things changed gradually. Additional problems cropped up at the age of fifty, middle-aged blues?

The death of my father brought me unhappiness. I am surprised that my parent's death brought many problems for me. My father was my refuge during my struggles in life. Just the thought and presence of my father gave me the strength to fight through life. Suddenly, I did not have any support mechanism after his death. I did not have a refuge. Man's desire for refuge is immense. But there is no real refuge in life; man has to take shelter in himself; that is the only way out, as Buddha said. The discussion about refuge is in a separate chapter. Read that chapter for more information.

Death of father

My father's death affected me more, and the first reason is the disappearance of refuge, as discussed in the earlier paragraph. The second reason is that I expected my siblings to play the role of father. That is a great disappointment. I grieved a lot for my father. It is not merely his death but my disappointment with my siblings for not filling the role of a father. There is no escape from reality. The only solution is Buddha, take refuge in

yourself and make yourself an island. That is the only solution. As said in the above paragraph, The discussion about refuge is in a separate chapter. Read that chapter for more information.

What will a single child do?

Modern-day life is full of single children who don't have brothers, sisters, or cousins to rely on. What will be the support mechanism for them? They have to join some religious group to survive and for emotional support. Even entering a religious group may not give complete satisfaction. But take refuge in yourself, as Buddha said; that is the ultimate solace. That is the way out.

Disappointment with spouse

Another primary reason for unhappiness is disappointment with the spouse. It is a big problem; many cannot solve, resulting in divorce. Each individual is searching for happiness, which is hard to come by. Immediately the spouse concludes that the other partner is the reason for unhappiness. In addition, one partner expects the other partner to act as a god and provide happiness.

Is it possible to act like a god and give happiness to the other partner? Not possible. But you can become Buddha, achieve enlightenment and provide joy to the other partner. Try to maintain family life as far as possible. If you cannot manage married life, you better get out and become a sanyasi (monk).

That is what happens to many people. I was wondering about a large number of roaming sanyasis in India. I think they are defeated, people. Not able to cope with the demands of life. There is nothing wrong with becoming a sanyasi; that is a great escape from the sufferings of this materialistic world.

The second period of joy

I am enjoying the second period of joy in my life for the last four years (2018 -22). I removed those problems as discussed above. The issues were the death of my father, disappointment with my siblings, disappointment with my spouse, and unsatisfactory office life. After removing all these impurities, my mind is relaxed and enjoying a period of 'Nirvana.' I don't know how long this 'nirvana' will remain. However, I am confident that I will find a solution with Buddha's help and continue to maintain my Nirvana.

Chapter-5

Other philosophical ideas of the world

First of all, let us start with Jewish philosophy.

The fundamental qualities needed for any human being are narrated in the Ten Commandments. They are as follows:

Ten commandments of Moses

These commandments are fundamental to any civilized society; no harm in adopting these basic principles.

- 1 Thou shalt have no other gods before me
- 2 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
- 3 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain
- 4 Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy
- 5 Honour thy father and thy mother
- 6 Thou shalt not kill
- 7 Thou shalt not commit adultery
- 8 Thou shalt not steal
- 9 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour
- 10 Thou shalt not covet (neighbour's house)
 Thou shalt not covet (neighbour's wife)
 Thou shalt not covet (neighbour's servants, animals, or anything else)

The first two commandments may not be palatable to Hindus. Let us ignore those two and adopt the remaining eight

commandments. They are a general and essential requirement for any civilized life. One should remember that these fundamental principles existed even before Moses. The forty negative confessions of a dead man's soul before the ancient Egyptian gods include all these ten commandments.

Religions have been transformed to make good servants.

The kings and priests of the ancient and Middle Ages wanted a servile society, not an independent-thinking society. The priests had acted as collaborators in this grand scheme. That is the reason for many distortions in religious ideas. The authorities were very particular that people did not think for themselves and acted obediently to leaders. Everything changed with the arrival of Martin Luther King and Protestantism in Europe. Everything turned topsy turvy. In contrast, Buddhism releases man from bondage and makes him independent.

But inter-dependence is needed.

Dalai -Lama, in his book, has devoted an entire chapter to the issue of interdependence. He has full justification for the interdependent nature of human society. Note that Dalai lama is advocating inter-dependency, not dependency. There is a big difference between these two principles.

Mudras



The above-given hand signal is called Mudra in the Indian vocabulary. Buddha is famous for many philosophical mudras.



*Picture
courtesy*

[\(www.jagranjosh.com/\)](http://www.jagranjosh.com/)

**E. meditate on seven factors of enlightenment
(Bhojjhanga)**

They are as follows:

1. mindfulness (Sati)
2. Investigation and research into various problems of doctrine (This is the method used by me)
3. Energy (Viriya)
4. Joy (Piti)
5. Relaxation
6. concentration
7. equanimity

Chapter -6

Psychological problems

Self-centeredness of children

Children think they are the centre of the world and therefore show little genuine interest in the conditions and feelings of other people. But unfortunately, few people do not grow out of their infant mentality. Such people ignore the needs and feelings of their kith and kin. When will they grow up? I think there is little chance for them ever to grow up. How will they attain the psychological 'nirvana' – less chance? Self – annihilation – remote possibility. Let us consider self-annihilation in the next paragraph.

Annihilation of self

Annihilation is the last chapter in the spiritual journey.

The idea of self and clinging to self create all the problems in the human mind (popularly called egoism). Through prolonged psychological discipline, the individual gives up all attachment to

his limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes, and fears. His ambitions being dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass on him; he becomes, that is to say—anonymity. No longer resist the self-annihilation requisite for re-birth in the realization of truth and so becomes ripe for the great one-moment.

How to annihilate self? The simple solution, imagine that you are dead. Everything dies with you. No more love, affection, attachment, and hatred. Pure Nirvana.

Maya (Illusion)

Shankaracharya, in his book *Viveka-choodamani*, talks about Maya (illusion). (Verse 108 to 110) (Shankaracharya, 2013). He says Maya is powerful; it hides all the truth with a veil of ignorance, and it is tough to come out of it. Yes, the illusion is compelling; I have seen well-educated men/ women who still believe in illogical rituals and miracles. How will it be possible to overcome the illusion? Defining 'Maya', as said by Shankaracharya, is difficult. But it is more or less similar to 'mara' as discussed in Buddhist literature. Maya is a mellowed form of 'mara' the devil.

Buddha also talks about illusion.

Buddha talks about Mara – Maya and Mara

–is it the same?

CHAPTER 2 RADHA SAMYUTTA (WITH RADHA)

SN 23.1 MARA SUTTA: MARA

REFERENCE

WHAT THE BUDDHIST MARA DEMON TEACHES US ABOUT LIFE AND ATTACHMENTS
(THEDAILYMEDITATION.COM)

The discussion is the extract from the work of Paul Harrison.
The article is available on the website 'daily meditation.com'.

**What The Buddhist Mara Demon Teaches Us About Life
and Attachments**

There is the story of the mara demon in Buddhism. It is a Buddhist teaching that is all about freeing your mind. To unblock your mind, you must know how to stop what Buddhism calls the Mara (demon) from controlling you. Just like how Buddha stopped Mara. Please note that the temptation of Jesus by the devil is similar to the temptation of Buddha by Mara.

While the Buddha was trying to find enlightenment, the Buddhist Mara demon tempted Buddha with visions of beautiful women who were Mara's daughters [1].

The temptations stopped Buddha from achieving absolute enlightenment, just as temptations and attachments stop you and me from becoming enlightened.

We are all tempted by "demons". We all have temptations and desires. And those temptations stop us from living in the moment with pure peace. To find inner peace, we need to free our minds of Mara.

How The Buddhist Mara Demon Stops You from Being Free

The story of Buddha and Mara tells us a lot about ourselves. It is a very potent Buddhist wisdom [READ: [Best Buddhist Wisdoms](#)]

We all want to have free minds. We all want to stop negative thoughts, enjoy a quiet mind, and have inner peace. But it's hard.

Attachments. Things like work, material possessions, and ideas of the self. All of those million attachments we cling to; are what stop us from feeling free. Even as long as 600 BC, people knew that mental attachments cause stress. That is why we must strive to release ourselves from attachments.



Buddhist Mara Demon Story

Buddha detached himself from everything. He no longer sought material possessions. He sought complete peace of mind.

One day the Buddha sat by the Bodhi tree. He said he would not move until he found complete peace of mind. Buddha wanted to feel complete freedom. He wanted freedom from a particular thing: Mara (demon).

In Buddhism, Mara is the demon/devil.

While Buddha was meditating by the Bodhi tree, Mara entered Buddha's mind. In one of the most famous Buddhist stories, Mara showed the Buddha images of beautiful women, material possessions, indulgences, power, and all those other temptations.

Like ordinary men are tempted by sex, wealth, and power, so is Buddha. Those were the things keeping Buddha's mind from freedom. But Buddha knew a valuable secret. He knew those

temptations were stopping him from achieving complete peace of mind. And so the Buddha sat and refused to move until he had conquered Mara.

What The Buddhist Mara Demon Teaches Us

The story of Buddha and Mara teaches us to free the mind. In Buddhism, Mara is the personification of the things that stop us from being free. Buddha saw Mara's temptations and the thoughts which kept his bondage. And at first, he tried to fight them. He wrestled with Mara. He fought to push Mara back. But every time Buddha pushed Mara back, Mara became stronger.

Fighting with temptations makes those temptations stronger.

Buddha needed a different strategy.

Buddha couldn't beat Mara by fighting him. He needed a different strategy. And so he allowed the Mara demon into his mind and *observed* Mara. He didn't fight those temptations. He just allowed them to exist. He was *mindful* of them. (*this is called mindful meditation*)

It's one of the main lessons of Buddhism: Mara (demons/attachments) can be conquered with mindfulness. Buddha learned that when you see your thoughts and temptations (when you see Mara) and focus on Mara with pure consciousness—not fighting those temptations, just mindfully

observing them—those temptations, those demons (Mara) lose power over you.

Pure consciousness was the weapon with which Buddha defeated Mara.

To be free in life, you must let go of all the things you're clinging to. You have to accept things the way you are. And you have to see things for what they are. Letting go of those things is one of the best ways to quiet your mind.

When you observe your temptations, your desires, your anger, and other mental states with *pure consciousness*, you gain power over them. That is the basics of Mindfulness Meditation. When we let things be, we stop temptations, demons, and Mara from controlling us.

Attachments

Attachments are things the mind clings to. For instance, you might cling to a relationship even though it's over. You might stick to a career you know just isn't working out. When you cling to those "attachments", you're trying to force your view on the world rather than just letting things be.

Attachments are a severe problem. Attachments are like a disease that consumes the mind. When you're afraid for your

health, those fears wrap around your mind and change the way you see the world, almost like tinted glasses over your eyes.

But when you step back and observe your mind with pure consciousness, you free your mind from negative states. Strip yourself of attachments, and you will find complete freedom in life.

Whether you want to feel free in your relationship, you want to feel free from depression, or you want to feel free from stress, anxiety, and tension. Whatever you want to be free from, you will find freedom when you remove attachments, like a ship free of its anchor.

Mindfulness

Present moment mindfulness is a practice in which you focus your mind on the present moment. It's been scientifically proven to boost happiness levels, eradicate stress, and create feelings of complete freedom in life. University of Oregon researchers even discovered that integrative body-mind training could result in brain changes that may be protective against mental illness. And all you need to do is focus on the present moment.

The present moment.

It's like a gift that you can open at any time. A gift that will immediately make you peaceful, happy and free. All you have to do is focus your mind on the present moment and see reality

precisely as it is. Because when you are mindful of the present moment, you release attachments, which will help free your mind.

Step back from your attachments. Focus the mind on now. That's the key to complete freedom in life.

What are Vasanas? This term is frequently used in Hindu philosophical discussions.

Vasana means **smell or fragrance**. Vasanas: In the spiritual sense, they are deeply ingrained mental tendencies strengthened by repeated thoughts and actions of the same nature. Vasana could be defined as a '**karmic effect**'. The karmic effect does not mean the activities of your past life (I do not believe in a past life). The actions of the present life linger on, just like the smell of agarbathi that stays on even after extinguishing, just like the body perfume, which lingers on for lots of time in a room even though the person who used perfume has left the place. Just like that, our old bad actions effects linger on in our lives, similarly, good deeds done by us in the past bring good effects in our lives till death. That is a karmic effect. That is vasana.

ARTICLE BY – STEVE BEKOW

THE BELOW-GIVEN PARA ON 'VASANAS' IS THE EXTRACT OF THE ARTICLE FROM STEVE BEKOW.

[What is a Vasana? – Part 1/2 \(goldenageofgaia.com\)](http://goldenageofgaia.com)

What Vasanas Are and How They Come to Be

Vasanas could be defined as automatic, mechanical, or habitual ways of responding to situations. They are ingrained patterns of behaviour.

Most people do not know what vasanas are. They are our karmic residue, the precipitate of, or what is left over from, our perpetrations in life. They also can be seen as our old issues, unfinished business, and excess baggage in life. They skew our behaviour, and we're seldom aware they are operating.

They derive from decisions in response to earlier incidents or life episodes involving shock and loss, which convinced us never to do some things and always do others. Somehow, we shut down to life, stopped responding spontaneously, and became robots.

Usually, our vasanas do not subside. They are persistent, and their influence on us grows over time as we commit fresh perpetrations when they erupt in situations of upset or crisis,

When early childhood incidents occur, we often decide how to be and how not to be in life. I'm never going to love again. I am always going to be cautious. A vasana is rooted in these incidents and decisions. It ramifies itself each time a later, similar incident occurs, and we reaffirm and follow the pattern. We

become creatures of habit, predictably and faithfully following our vasanas.

As a result, our broader experience of life narrows or shuts down completely. We close ourselves off to spontaneity and become sclerotic, arthritic, petrified, fossilized, concretized, or calcified. We become the walking dead, lacking any impulse to just be and enjoy.

**S.N.Goenka has described vasanas as
"sleeping volcanoes".**

As sleeping volcanoes, they erupt when the stress placed upon us by our attitudes moves the tectonic plates of our muscle tension. Creating a crack in our plate of armour rushes the lava of unfinished business, which we project onto others, sometimes killing off relationships.

Every time we become inflamed, cranky, crabby, obstinate, or angry, express resentment, get irritable, fussy, or inhibited, we respond to our vasanas. And, what is worse, vasanas grow and grow with each fresh explosion.

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Man is eviller than animal.

I am living in a forest area near Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, India.

Many different kinds of animals visit my neighbourhood area. Prominent among them are the Bison and Leopard. I posted a message in my WhatsApp group, "I am living with the fear of wild animals". Everyone showed their concern as usual.

But, my opinion is that "Man is more dangerous than animals. You may come across many animals, they will just move away, if you don't disturb them. But man is not like that, he may harm you, even if you try to move away from him. He will forget all the good things done by you and may harm you.

So which one is better 'Man or Animal'?

Message of Keshava swami

(Monk at ISKON temple London)

Message about success

Many a time people think success is measured by the final result or outcome. Swamiji says that is a wrong attitude. What is the effort taken in achieving the goal the direction taken the good deeds done are the success, not the outcome?

The final result may be anything. The final result is influenced by various factors but the right effort is enough.

Good message.

Background of unhappiness

In his book 'A New Earth' Eckhart Tolle states that whenever there is unhappiness in your life, you can see some standard thoughts in your mind like the following,

'I will be happy only after achieving success in a competitive exam like 'the civil service exam'

'I will be happy only after getting IAS in my competitive life'

'I will be happy only after earning one crore rupees'

'Something happened in my earlier part of life if that had not happened, I would be in peace now

'Something is happening now that should not be happening, and it is preventing me from being happy now'

This kind of thought makes you unhappy.

Living in the present

Eckhart Tolle says, there is the possibility of happiness if you live '**one with life**'. (Tolle, 2018 pp. 113 -115) Being one with life is being one with '**Now**'. That is living in the present.

He says, 'Life is the dancer, and you are the dance'.

This was not acceptable to me for a long time. I always wanted an idealistic way of life. The above statement doesn't appeal to me.

There is an old saying in Tamil, that the tree which stands against the wind falls, whereas the small grass which bends for the severe hurricane wind survives. It may be the secret of life and happiness.

The ego loves its resentment of reality. What is reality? Whatever is. Buddha called it– the suchness of life' which is no more than the suchness of the moment.

This one-point formula will not bring happiness. Man's mind is full of problems, bundles of problems. Man suffers from multiple problems, not a single one, hence he needs proper medication to soothe all these sufferings. Buddha is the greatest doctor of mind all his four medicines are composed of four noble truths which can be further subdivided into 20 sub-components. With all these 20 points we should meditate to get a full dose of medicine and full recovery.

Study animal behaviour

There is some subject called ----- study of animal behaviour. Studying animal behaviour helps us to understand the human behaviour. Because man has evolved from apes and chimpanzees. I believe in the theory proposed by Charles Darwin. It is really surprising some religious groups dogmatically insist on the

divine origin of human beings, which leads to confusion and miserable interpretation. Let us accept the scientific theory of evolution of man and try to succeed in life. In future also we should adopt scientific truths to progress in life.

Buddha is clear on this issue, do not accept the ideas just because it is said by some religious guru, test the ideas, and accept them once you find them useful. In opposition to this idea, Christianity and Islam expect to have blind faith to get blessings, which may not work in the long run.

Now, coming back to animal behaviour, I have been living in this forest area for the past five years (2018 -2013) I find it interesting to study animal behaviours. Monkeys are living in a group for collective security, whereas the male bison lives alone because it is not afraid of any other animal. After all, it is huge and capable of defending itself.

What is the position of man in this regard? Man has evolved from a monkey, man faces all the problems faced by monkeys. So we have to follow the monkey solution to our problem of insecurity, we have to lead a collective life to get some relative security. That is the reason various religious rituals developed to bind the man together. Somebody going against this idea has to develop extraordinary mental strength to survive. Religion means 'to bind' that is to bind the man together to be verified.

Observing the behaviour of lions and tigers is interesting. Both animals have developed from a common ancestor some primitive cat. But both are different in their approach to life. Lion lives in a group and hunts together this character developed because of the savanna / grassland condition. The tiger lives a lonely life in a thick forest and the loneliness doesn't affect the mental stability of a tiger, whereas loneliness affects the lion and it searches for companionship. Man is like a lion, he needs social companionship to survive and enjoy life. Why work against millions of years of evolution? You will be defeated.

But, why do religious mendicants live alone?

Yes, that is the greatest puzzle. Many of the religious teachers lived alone for many years to understand the mind, like Buddha and Jesus. Yet, they finally returned to society to teach the common people. The Ten Zen diagrams also say the same thing in the final stage the mendicant returns back to society. Yes, there is a need for solitude to analyse the mind but finally, you have to return to society.

I have experience living alone in this Kodai forest. I find that the noise of society disappears, and because of that disappearance of daily concern, the mind turns to spirituality. There is nothing else to do living in the forest. The Internet is not working and the cellphone there is no connectivity. The mind is deprived of entertainment, for a few days mind becomes agitated without entertainment, but the mind gradually settles

down. Reading religious books and meditation is the only entertainment in the forest. But, both are good entertainments, which change your life and bring stability to your life.

Entertainment – the mind is craving for entertainment all the time

It is important to note that the mind craves entertainment all the time. See, the impact of television and the Internet on human life. Internet is more addictive like hallucinogenic drugs and many youngsters are affected by Internet addiction at the present age (2010-30), I don't know what will be the future, but I find that the Internet is more destructive than television. Internet content providers like Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube and others supply some addictive content and people are engrossed in those materials for hours together. I don't know, when will it end and what course will it take. This internet addiction is more or less similar to the evil alcoholic addiction and drug addiction.

Is there are remedy for these addictions

It is a big question. I find that all the villages nearby are affected by alcoholism, and families are destroyed. Fortunately, these villages are not affected by drugs. However, drug usage is increasing in the nearby hill station of Kodaikanal. I find that drug usage is one of the popular activities in tourist places. I think, only govt control alone can reduce the menace.

Refer to historical examples. Opium wars in China. Imperialist power Britain was the promoter of the opium trade because it brought money to them. China was the victim, even though the Chinese king tried to block the opium trade, the colonial powers were so dominant they destroyed the Chinese kings and sold opium in China, which destroyed Chinese society. See the present condition, the present communist government effectively controls the opium trade and there is no problem of opium addiction in China. All countries need to take such control to effectively control this menace.

Alternative entertainments

All the above said addictions happen because of the need for some entertainment to mind. We should try to improve and provide alternate entertainment like dance, music, drama, sports and other such activities. That may be the solution.

I am interested in seeing Wild West movies of America to pass my time. It is a standard theme all the time. Cowboys, saloon scene, liquor bar, gambling and gunfight. Yet there are so many movies that I used to see regularly to kill time. What is the way out?

The interesting point to be noted here is even now, my college mates spend their time drinking liquor and gambling with card games. They used to do the same when I was working. Is there any way out? Other people are doing the same in social clubs. When the stakes are high, the entertainment is high, just like

Yudhishtir(Dharma) gambling in Mahabharat. Even the high level of enthusiasm for cricket is due to illegal gambling activity in India.

People need legal entertainment with minimum expenses. Going to the temple is one source of entertainment, and listening to pravachans (religious discourses) is another entertainment. Dance and music of temples is another. But these items are not popular with youngsters. Yet there is no other way other than listening to religious discourses, to keep the mind occupied and entertained.

This problem has existed since the time of Mahabharat itself, all religions prohibit this kind of gambling yet it is the popular mode of entertainment. Bullfighting is a kind of entertainment in Tamil Nadu from time immemorial onwards. This game was banned by the Supreme Court of India for a few years because of pressure from animal lovers. This ban was revoked after a state-wide agitation by all sections of people.

I find some kind of legitimacy in this game, the youngsters participating in the games are regularly practising with bulls and spend their extra time. They had to be physically fit to participate in such bullfighting events. That makes them refrain from alcohol. In a way bullfighting is helpful to society, it keeps the mind of people occupied.

By [Vishal Agarwal](#)

Hatred, the Great Evil

Extreme ignorance, anger or jealousy leads to hatred or enmity due to which we want to attack, over-power, weaken or destroy the object of our hatred. We all generalise about people, groups, ideologies and so on in our lives. However, when this generalization is judgmental, when it is not based on the complete set of evidence available to us, and when we are unwilling to consider new or contrary data to revise our judgment, this generalization becomes a stereotype. A stereotype is a highly exaggerated and a negative view of the reality. It is especially resorted to by people who are quick to condemn people different from themselves, or in other words, by people who are intolerant themselves. Prejudice is rarely expressed explicitly. It is more often demonstrated through the creation of stereotypes, through the creation of a hated or disliked 'other', through an **excessive and obsessive focus on the negatives of this 'other', through half-truths, repeated and deliberate misrepresentations** and so on.

The scriptures ask us to give up hatred for others and instead practice love, compassion, kindness, ahimsa, gentleness and respect towards others: Dhṛtarāshtra says to [Duryodhana](#) (quoting Prahlada) – Not bearing enmity towards any creature in [mind](#), word or deed; having compassion for everyone and giving charity to the best of one's ability – these are the praiseworthy virtues. Any personal efforts that do not benefit others and doing which cause guilt in one's mind must never be carried out. Do only those deeds

that will get you praise in a full assembly of men. In brief, I have told you the definition of [Dharma](#).

“Even at times of calamity, a nobleman should desist from harbouring ill will or enmity towards others. He is like the sandalwood tree that imparts its fragrance even to the axe blade that strikes it down.”

“Foolish people never give up enmity, just as a line drawn on a rock cannot be erased. But the wise forgive and forget, their enmity is as ephemeral as a line drawn on the surface of water.”

Ref – Mahabharata – 12.124.66-68

Loneliness

Buddha says you should live like a male elephant. The male elephant lives in the forest alone. Only during breeding season, it join the herd. Buddha says it is better to live alone like an elephant, rather than living in the company of unholy people.

Is it possible to live a lonely life?

Sadhguru (Coimbatore) says, yes it is possible to lead a lonely life. Such life will be a meaningful and happy life. He says man has developed consciousness so much, he will be able to live alone.

Biology says man is a social animal, he has to live in a group like other social animals like monkeys and lions, whereas a tiger is a solitary animal, which lives alone, it is a character developed over a million years. Will the man be able to overcome the million years of evolution?

Yes, it is possible, that man has simultaneously developed the human consciousness, which is also called as sixth sense (self-awareness as said by Stephen Covey), which is lacking in animals.

Pavlov's experiment on dogs

One Russian scientist experimented with a dog. The dog was regularly fed after ringing the bell. After some time, the mere sound of ringing brought in uncontrolled salivation in the dog. This is called animal instinct, in which animals do not have control, but man has control over the instinct.

The following diagram explains the experiment:

Dog experiment –the ringing of a bell	Instant uncontrolled salivation Due to instinct reaction. It is an animal behaviour.
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Stimulus	Response
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Viktor frankl theory:

stimulus		response
	There is a gap between stimulus and response.	
	Freedom to choose Self-awareness Imagination Conscience Independent will	
	<i>This table is drawn after the diagram presented by Stephen R Covey in his book 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Page no 71 under the heading proactive model.</i>	

Viktor Frankl's theory is also something similar to this. Victor Frankl was a Jewish prisoner in a German concentration camp. He was a psychologist and survived the holocaust. While explaining his ordeal through the difficult days he explained this psychological phenomenon of withstanding those difficult moments, he explained the 'inner gap' in the mind which is capable of different responses to different situations.

Reference in Hindu literature

Surprisingly hindu literature also talks about the inner space. Refer to the book of Brahma Sutra by Pada Rayana chapter 1:3.13.

(Page 131 in the Tamil version of the by Rama Krishna Mutt, Chennai)

Article by Betagiri

Deficiencies in Hinduism

Only one aspect of Hinduism is common to all variants: the varna hierarchy. This caste system creates many problems for Hindu society.

The details below are based on Ankur Betageri's article, available on the Internet dated 18th November 2014 (Betageri, 2014). There is some truth about the varna system and hatred in Hindu society

Hinduism functions based on hatred. Instead of directing the hatred solely at the outsider like in Islam, or inward, at oneself and all of humanity, like in Christianity, hatred in Hinduism is graded according to a hierarchy defined by birth. Hatred is directed at all caste members except the Brahmins.

The intricate evolution of Hinduism

If there is one common thing to pan-Indian “Hinduism” (the nineteenth-century name for the post-Vedic religion Brahmanism), it is the varna-hierarchy. In the varna hierarchy, there are two poles: one of purity and one of pollution – which makes people worthy and contemptible. This worthiness and unworthiness are distributed in the hierarchy. The top-most varna is considered the most deserving and the bottom-most unworthy. The distribution of worth and non-worth is decided by one's karma in past lives and supported by the theory of the transmigration of souls. No matter how much the Hindus deny the practice of caste discrimination in their faith, the foundation of Hinduism is inherently discriminatory and full of hostilities. Hinduism, or Brahminism, in its essence is caste hatred.

Though Brahmins claim the Vedas as their holy texts, the religion that we find in the Vedas themselves has little to do with contemporary Brahminism. The religion that we find in the oldest of the Vedas, the Rig Veda, which scholars classify as Early Vedism, is the very antithesis of Brahminism, what with its celebration of beef-eating, gambling, drinking, and sexual orgies. The religion that resembles contemporary Brahminism was largely consolidated in the post-Vedic age called the ‘Brahmana period’.

In its earliest form, Brahminism was a ritualistic religion with the priestly caste of Brahmins wielding supreme power over the masses by claiming magical and supernatural powers for their

rituals. The three gunas of sattva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (darkness), hierarchically distributed among worthy and non-worthy varnas, formed its central tenet. But Brahminism, due to its Brahmin-supremacist and discriminatory practices, lost its appeal among the masses and was replaced with the more egalitarian religions of Buddhism and Jainism sometime in the fifth century BCE.

By the second century BCE, Buddhism, as the state religion of King Ashoka, was influential in a geographical area larger than present-day India. It was quite significant on a pan-Indian level until the seventh century AD when the religion was violently uprooted and destroyed by Adi Shankara and his followers. Adi Shankara re-instituted Brahminism as a pan-Indian religion by building mutts in four strategic parts of the country. Nonetheless, this ultra-Brahmin-supremacist version of Brahminism lost popularity in the eleventh century and was reinvented as Bhagavatism.

The new drastically changed Bhagavatism became a popular sect in which the blue God, Krishna, was portrayed as an apocalyptic deity with qualities of a super-God. Brahmanism, never a monotheistic religion, now broke into mutually antagonistic and warring sects like Shaivism and Vaishnavism. These Brahminical sects began competing with the more heterodox religions like Jainism, Sikhism, and Veerashaivism to win over the masses, which craved a more egalitarian and humane society.

Scholars who see Bhagavatism as a unitary religion, forming a phase in the evolution of Brahminism, often overlook the existence of disparate Brahminical sects. But since Bhagavatism was the more dominant, and therefore central, sect, they see it as the reinvention of Brahminism itself. Bhagavatism can be seen as the Brahminical equivalent of the Protestant Christian revolution. It became very popular among the masses by allowing them to reach God directly through the path of Bhakti marga (the path of devotion). It was this Bhagavatism, which branched into various smaller sects like Sri Vaishnavism. These smaller sects were then brought together, nationalized, and reinvented in the nineteenth century as 'Hinduism'.

(end of Article by Betagiri)

Wars are inevitable

I am a student of agriculture but studied deeply the history subject for my civil service examination. Hence, I have some interest and understanding about the subject of history.

For a long time, I was under the impression wars could be avoided. Buddha was also under the impression wars could be

stopped he stopped the war between his tribe and a nearby tribe. But, after the passing of some time, the Buddha's tribe was wiped out by a nearby king. So violence has success over peace-loving people.

Conflicts in this world (war)

War is inevitable in this world. Earlier in ancient times and medieval times people used to die in large numbers because of contagious diseases, but nowadays death due to disease has drastically reduced because of modern medicines. Hence population is exploding, and there is no logical way of controlling the population, especially in India. Indian politicians have given population control after the disastrous failure of the population control programme of former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi in the year 1977.

Note the failure of governments in Sri Lanka (2023) and Bangladesh in the year 2024. India will also go in the same way if not properly managed. At least Sri Lanka had economic mismanagement, but Bangladesh is a case of overpopulation and failure of govt on all fronts. Bangladesh's economic situation was much better than Pakistan's, still, it is undergoing popular agitations (2024) because the country is not able to withstand the various pressures associated with overpopulation.

Overpopulation will result in civil unrest and wars. Note the condition of Sudan and Yemen. The conflicts in these countries are due to overpopulation and failed governments (2024). There

are many countries in the failed states category in Africa Somalia, Haiti and Pakistan. India is on the borderline it may go in either the direction failed state or a surviving state.

Russia -Ukraine war (2024) is purely out of greed. America wants to maintain its dollar supremacy, and for that USA wants to destroy Russia, resulting in the proxy war of Ukraine. A similar thing may happen in India and India may go in the way of Ukraine unless properly managed by political parties.

The conclusion, wars are inevitable in this world and you should make yourself ready for a war and face the consequences.

Desire for survival

(AI-generated)

Desire for survival is another force which influences human beings. The desire to survive is an instinct in humans that's rooted in our biology and evolution. It's a basic need that includes the need for food, water, shelter, and safety. The desire to survive is often linked to the will to live, which is the drive to self-preserve and improve one's life. The desire to survive leads to psychological complications. Here are some other things to consider about the desire to survive:

Survival mentality

A frame of mind that helps people overcome challenges by focusing on their ability to survive instead of being a victim.

Hope

A combination of optimism and realism that can help people survive despite the odds.

Pleasure and pain

Pleasure is associated with things that promote the survival of our species, while pain is associated with things that don't.

Primal instincts

Humans have a primal instinct to hunt and gather, which helps them survive.

Evolution

The best-adapted humans survive and pass their characteristics on to future generations.

The human desire for survival

(AI – generated)

The human desire for survival has profound psychological implications that influence behaviour, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships. Here are some key aspects:

Instinctual Response:

The desire for survival is an innate instinct that can trigger the fight-or-flight response. This biological reaction influences psychological states, leading to heightened anxiety, stress, or aggression in life-threatening situations.

Motivation and Behaviour:

The survival instinct drives motivation. People engage in behaviours that they believe will enhance their chances of survival, such as seeking food, shelter, and safety. This can manifest in both healthy and unhealthy ways, impacting lifestyle choices and social dynamics.

Fear and Anxiety:

Awareness of mortality fosters fear and anxiety, which can motivate protective behaviours. This fear can lead to various coping mechanisms, such as avoidance, denial, or, conversely, a heightened appreciation for life, influencing how individuals approach risks.

Social Bonds:

The survival instinct often promotes social cohesion and bonding. Humans are social creatures, and the need for mutual support during crises can strengthen relationships and create a sense of community or belonging.

Existential Reflection:

The desire for survival can lead to existential questions about purpose and meaning. Individuals may seek fulfilment and significance in their lives, often leading to philosophical or spiritual explorations.

Resilience and Adaptation:

The instinct to survive can foster resilience. People often adapt to challenging circumstances, developing coping strategies and skills that enhance their ability to manage stress and crises.

Cultural Influence:

Different cultures have unique views on survival that shape psychological responses. Cultural narratives around life, death, and resilience can influence individual attitudes and behaviours.

Understanding these implications can help individuals and mental health professionals address fears, anxieties, and behaviours related to survival, fostering healthier coping strategies and promoting psychological well-being.

The survival instinct and social bonds

(Generated by ---Sider Fusion- AI)

The survival instinct significantly influences social bonds and the formation of communities. Here's a deeper exploration of how this dynamic works:

1. Collective Responsibility

In threatening situations, individuals often feel a heightened sense of responsibility towards one another. The instinct to survive can encourage people to prioritize the well-being of their group, fostering mutual support and cooperation. This collective effort can create strong social ties and a shared sense of purpose.

2. Empathy and Altruism

The recognition of shared vulnerability can enhance empathy and altruistic behaviour. When individuals perceive that others are facing similar threats, they are more likely to offer help, share resources, or provide emotional support. Such acts reinforce bonds and create a supportive environment, which can be crucial for survival.

3. Increased Trust

Shared experiences, especially in the face of adversity, can build trust within groups. When people work together to overcome challenges, they often develop a sense of reliability and interdependence. This trust is foundational for strong relationships, enabling individuals to feel secure in their social networks.

4. Coping Mechanisms

During crises, communal support systems can serve as vital coping mechanisms. Having a network of friends, family, or community members to turn to can alleviate stress and reduce feelings of isolation. These relationships provide emotional stability and practical assistance, reinforcing the notion that individuals are not alone in their struggles.

5. Identity and Belonging

The desire for survival can solidify group identity, as individuals find comfort and strength in their affiliations. Whether through family, friendship groups, or larger social communities, these bonds enhance feelings of belonging, contributing to psychological well-being and resilience.

6. Rituals and Traditions

Crises often catalyze the formation of rituals and traditions that emphasize social bonding. Communities may come together to commemorate shared experiences or to support one another, reinforcing social cohesion and a sense of collective identity. These practices can serve as vital sources of support and comfort.

7. Long-term Relationships

The experiences shared during challenging times can lead to the development of long-lasting relationships. People who navigate difficulties together often forge deep connections that

endure beyond the crisis, contributing to ongoing social support networks.

Conclusion

The survival instinct plays a crucial role in shaping social bonds, emphasizing the importance of community and cooperation in overcoming challenges. Understanding these dynamics can enhance our ability to foster supportive relationships and resilient communities, ultimately contributing to individual and collective well-being.

Desire for meaning in life

Victor Frankl and logotherapy

Logotherapy is a form of existential therapy developed by neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl.[1] It is founded on the premise that the primary motivational force of individuals is to find meaning in life.[2] Frankl describes it as "the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy"[3] [4] along with Freud's psychoanalysis and Alfred Adler's individual psychology.[5]

Logotherapy is based on an existential analysis[6] focusing on Kierkegaard's will to meaning as opposed to Adler's Nietzschean doctrine of will to power or Freud's will to pleasure. Rather than power or pleasure, logotherapy is founded upon the belief that striving to find meaning in life is the primary, most powerful motivating and driving force in humans.[2] A short

introduction to this system is given in Frankl's most famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946), in which he outlines how his theories helped him to survive his Holocaust experience and how that experience further developed and reinforced his theories. Presently, there are many logotherapy institutes around the world.

Basic principles

The notion of logotherapy was created with the Greek word *logos* ("meaning"). Frankl's concept is based on the premise that the primary motivational force of an individual is to find meaning in life. The following list of tenets represents the basic principles of logotherapy:

Life has meaning under all circumstances, even the most miserable ones.

Our main motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life.

We have the freedom to find meaning in what we do, and what we experience, or at least in the stance we take when faced with a situation of unchangeable suffering.[2]

The human spirit is referred to in several of the assumptions of logotherapy, but the use of the term spirit is not "spiritual" or "religious." In Frankl's view, the spirit is the will of the human being.

The emphasis, therefore, is on the search for meaning, which is not necessarily the search for God or any other supernatural being.[2] Frankl also noted the barriers to humanity's quest for meaning in life. He warns against "...affluence, hedonism, [and] materialism..." in the search for meaning.[7]

Purpose in life and meaning in life constructs appeared in Frankl's logotherapy writings with relation to existential vacuum and will to meaning, as well as others who have theorized about and defined positive psychological functioning. Frankl observed that it may be psychologically damaging when a person's search for meaning is blocked.

Positive life purpose and meaning were associated with strong religious beliefs, membership in groups, dedication to a cause, life values, and clear goals. Adult development and maturity theories include the purpose in life concept. Maturity emphasizes a clear comprehension of life's purpose, directedness, and intentionality which contributes to the feeling that life is meaningful.

Frankl's ideas were operationalized by Crumbaugh and Maholick's Purpose in Life (PIL) test, which measures an individual's meaning and purpose in life. With the test, investigators found that meaning in life mediated the relationships between religiosity and

well-being uncontrollable stress and substance use; depression and self-derogation. Crumbaugh found that the Seeking of Noetic Goals Test (SONG) is a complementary measure of the PIL. While the PIL measures the presence of meaning, the SONG measures orientation towards meaning. A low score in the PIL but a high score in the SONG would predict a better outcome in the application of Logotherapy.

Discovering meaning

According to Frankl, "We can discover this meaning in life in three different ways: (1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering" and that "everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances". On the meaning of suffering, Frankl gives the following example:

Frankl emphasized that realizing the value of suffering is meaningful only when the first two creative possibilities are not available (for example, in a concentration camp) and only when such suffering is inevitable – he was not proposing that people suffer unnecessarily.

The Easterlin Paradox

The Easterlin Paradox is an observation made by economist Richard Easterlin in the 1970s, which asserts that, despite rising income levels within a society, people's reported levels of happiness or life satisfaction do not increase correspondingly over time. Essentially, while wealthier individuals tend to report higher levels of happiness than poorer individuals, across countries and over time, increases in average income do not lead to a sustained increase in overall happiness.

Key points of the Easterlin Paradox include:

1. **Relative Income:** People tend to evaluate their well-being in relative terms rather than absolute terms. This means that individuals often compare their income and living standards to those of others, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction if they perceive themselves as lagging behind.
2. **Adaptation:** People adapt to changes in their circumstances over time, a phenomenon known as the "hedonic treadmill." As income rises, people may initially feel happier, but this boost in happiness tends to diminish as they become accustomed to their new wealth or lifestyle.

In summary, the Easterlin Paradox highlights the complexities of the relationship between income and happiness, suggesting

that higher income does not necessarily lead to greater happiness in the long run.

Role of social factors in the Easterlin paradox.

Social factors play a significant role in the Easterlin Paradox by influencing individuals' perceptions of happiness and well-being. Here are several key ways that social factors contribute to this phenomenon:

1. **Social Comparisons:** People often gauge their happiness in relation to others. When individuals perceive themselves as having lower status or income compared to their peers, they may feel dissatisfied, even if their absolute circumstances improve. Social comparisons can lead to a sense of competition and anxiety about one's standing, which diminishes overall happiness.
2. **Community and Social Networks:** Strong social connections and a sense of belonging are critical determinants of well-being. Individuals in socially supportive environments often report higher levels of happiness, regardless of their income. Conversely, social isolation or weak community ties can lead to lower happiness levels even for those with higher incomes.
3. **Cultural Context:** Different cultures have varying definitions of happiness and success. In collectivist cultures, for instance, relationships and social harmony may take precedence over individual wealth. In such contexts, increased income may

not correlate with greater happiness if it doesn't contribute to community well-being or social cohesion.

4. **Work and Employment Relations:** Job satisfaction, workplace relationships, and perceived job security significantly influence happiness. Individuals may have high incomes but report low happiness if they are in stressful jobs with poor social support. Conversely, fulfilling work environments with supportive colleagues and meaningful tasks can enhance well-being, irrespective of income level.
5. **Inequality and Social Justice:** Societal views on fairness and inequality can impact happiness. High levels of income inequality can lead to feelings of injustice and dissatisfaction among individuals, particularly if they perceive their struggles in relation to extremes of wealth within their society.
6. **Civic Engagement:** Participation in community activities, volunteering, and other forms of civic engagement have been linked to higher levels of happiness. People who feel they contribute positively to their communities and have a sense of purpose tend to report greater satisfaction, which can counterbalance the effects of relative income.
7. **Mental Health and Support Systems:** The presence of robust mental health support and social services can mitigate feelings of discontent that may arise from income increases.

A society that prioritizes mental health and provides support systems fosters resilience and well-being among its members.

In summary, social factors such as community ties, cultural norms, comparisons with others, workplace dynamics, and perceptions of inequality all significantly influence the relationship between income and happiness. They can either enhance or diminish well-being, thus playing a crucial role in the Easterlin Paradox.

role of social networks in human happiness

Social networks play a crucial role in human happiness by providing emotional support, fostering a sense of belonging, and influencing overall well-being through various mechanisms. Here are some key ways in which social networks contribute to happiness:

1. **Emotional Support:** Friends, family, and social connections can provide critical emotional support during times of stress, trauma, or hardship. Having people to turn to for comfort and assistance can significantly enhance feelings of security and contentment.
2. **Sense of Belonging:** Being part of a social network fosters a sense of belonging and community. This connectedness can

enhance self-esteem and provide individuals with a support system, which is essential for mental and emotional health.

3. **Shared Experiences:** Engaging in social activities with others creates shared experiences and memories, contributing to happiness. Celebrating achievements, participating in recreational activities, and simply spending time together can enhance overall life satisfaction.
4. **Social Interaction:** Regular social interaction is associated with lower levels of loneliness and depression. Engaging with others encourages laughter, joy, and positive feelings, all of which contribute to enhanced well-being.
5. **Resource Sharing:** Social networks can serve as platforms for sharing resources and information. This can include sharing knowledge, opportunities, or assistance, which can alleviate challenges and enhance quality of life.
6. **Positive Reinforcement:** Friends and family can provide encouragement and motivation to pursue personal goals, creating a positive feedback loop that reinforces behaviours associated with happiness and well-being.
7. **Coping Mechanisms:** Social networks offer diverse perspectives and coping strategies for dealing with life's challenges. This collective wisdom can help individuals process experiences more effectively, promoting resilience and better mental health.

8. **Improved Physical Health:** Strong social networks can positively influence physical health through several channels. People with strong social connections tend to engage in healthier lifestyles, adhere to medical advice, and experience lower stress levels, all of which contribute to overall happiness.
9. **Social Norms and Expectations:** Social networks can shape individual behaviours and attitudes, promoting norms that value well-being, gratitude, and positivity. Participating in such networks can enhance an individual's happiness by creating an environment that encourages these traits.
10. **Support During Transitions:** Life transitions, such as moving to a new city, starting a new job, or experiencing major life events, can be smoother and less stressful with a solid social network. Support from others during these times can lead to greater adaptability and contentment.

In summary, social networks deeply influence human happiness by providing emotional support, promoting a sense of belonging, enhancing social interactions, sharing resources, and influencing overall well-being. The quality and depth of social connections often determine happiness levels, making social relationships vital for a fulfilling life.

Contradiction between Buddhism and other religions

One important fact to be noted is that Buddhism and other religions propose contradictory views. Buddhism rejects all human desires and endeavours to attain nirvana. Whereas other religions insist on fulfilling all human desires. How this contradiction is to be reconciled? The answer is the middle path, do not go to both extremes. Then it will be a balanced life.

The Middle Path, or Middle Way, is a central concept in Buddhism, articulated by Siddhartha Gautama. It represents a balanced approach to spiritual practice and life, avoiding extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Here are the main aspects of the Middle Path:

Avoidance of Extremes: The Middle Path emphasizes moderation. The Buddha recognized that pursuing a life of sensory pleasures (self-indulgence) or severe asceticism (self-mortification) does not lead to enlightenment. Instead, he advocated for a balanced lifestyle that neither indulges in excess nor deprives oneself excessively.

Noble Eightfold Path: The Middle Path is often linked with the Noble Eightfold Path, which provides a practical guideline for ethical and mental development.

Practical Application: In daily life, the Middle Path encourages individuals to seek balance in various aspects, including work, relationships, and personal aspirations. It suggests

that fulfilment comes from a harmonious approach rather than from extremes.

Spiritual Practice: The Middle Path emphasizes a gradual and pragmatic approach to meditation and ethical living, allowing practitioners to cultivate wisdom and compassion progressively without overwhelming themselves.

In summary, the Middle Path in Buddhism encourages a balanced and moderate approach to life and spiritual practice, guiding individuals toward enlightenment and the cessation of suffering while avoiding the pitfalls of extremism.

message of Nagarjuna on the idea of a middle path

Nagarjuna, a prominent Buddhist philosopher and the founder of the Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school of thought elaborated on the concept of the Middle Path through his writings and teachings. His views on the Middle Path focus on the idea of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and the avoidance of extremes in philosophical thought and existential understanding. Here are the key messages of Nagarjuna regarding the Middle Path:

Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*): Nagarjuna taught that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence. This means that things do not possess an independent, permanent essence; instead, they arise dependent on causes and conditions. Understanding emptiness is

crucial to navigating the Middle Way, as it helps individuals avoid the extremes of absolutism (viewing things as independently existent) and nihilism (viewing things as completely non-existent).

Two Truths Doctrine: Nagarjuna articulated the distinction between two levels of truth: conventional truth (*sāmvṛti*) and ultimate truth (*paramārtha*). Conventional truth refers to the everyday experience of phenomena, whereas ultimate truth points to the realization of emptiness. The Middle Path lies in recognizing both truths without clinging to the relative nature of conventional truth or falling into the pitfall of denying the reality of conventional experiences.

Avoidance of Extremes: Nagarjuna emphasized the importance of avoiding philosophical extremes, such as eternalism (the belief in permanent entities) and annihilationism (the belief in complete non-existence). The Middle Path navigates between these extremes, promoting a balanced understanding that acknowledges the dependent nature of reality.

Dependent Origination (*Pratītyasamutpāda*): Nagarjuna built upon the Buddhist concept of dependent origination, which teaches that all phenomena arise in dependence on causes and conditions. This understanding reinforces the Middle Path by highlighting the interrelatedness of all things and how clinging to fixed notions distorts our understanding of reality.

Practical Application: Nagarjuna's Middle Way is not only a theoretical concept but also a practical guide for ethical living and spiritual practice. It encourages practitioners to cultivate wisdom through meditation and reflection, leading to a profound understanding of the nature of reality and subsequently, a reduction in suffering.

Non-Duality: His teachings advocate a non-dualistic perspective, indicating that one should not cling to dualistic categories or concepts (such as existence vs. non-existence) but rather see through them to the underlying unity of all phenomena.

In summary, Nagarjuna's message on the Middle Path emphasizes an understanding of emptiness, the interdependent nature of reality, and the avoidance of extremes in thought and practice. His teachings guide individuals toward a profound insight into the nature of existence, facilitating a balanced approach to life and spiritual development.

Dependent origination theory of Buddha (conditioned genesis)

Dependent origination, also known as "pratītyasamutpāda" in Sanskrit or "paṭiccasamuppāda" in Pali, is a fundamental concept in Buddhism that explains the interdependent nature of reality and the process of existence. It illustrates how all

phenomena arise in dependence on various conditions and causes, rather than existing independently.

The core idea can be summarized in the following principles:

Interconnectedness: All things are interconnected, and nothing exists in isolation. Everything arises due to a combination of factors, and the nature of reality is one of constant change and interaction.

Twelve Links of Dependent Origination: In Buddhist philosophy, this concept is often illustrated through the Twelve Links (or Nidānas), which describe the cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth (samsara):

- i. **Ignorance (Avijjā):** Lack of understanding of reality.
- ii. **Mental Formations (Saṅkhāra):** Volitional actions stemming from ignorance.
- iii. **Consciousness (Viññāṇa):** The process of awareness arising from mental formations.
- iv. **Name and Form (Nāma-rūpa):** The psychological and physical aspects of an individual.
- v. **Six Sense Bases (Saḷāyatana):** The five senses and the mind that interact with the environment.

- vi. **Contact (Phassa):** The interaction between sense bases and external objects.
- vii. **Feeling (Vedanā):** The sensations experienced as a result of contact.
- viii. **Craving (Taṇhā):** Desire that arises from feelings.
- ix. **Clinging (Upādāna):** Grasping onto desires, thoughts, and experiences.
- x. **Becoming (Bhava):** The process of existence and the accumulation of conditions that lead to future rebirth.
- xi. **Birth (Jāti):** The actual birth or emergence of a being in the cycle of life.
- xii. **Ageing and Death (Jarā-maraṇa):** The inevitable decline and cessation of life.

Suffering and Liberation: Dependent origination highlights the nature of suffering (dukkha) in samsara. Understanding how all aspects of existence are interconnected allows individuals to recognize the root causes of suffering, ultimately leading to the possibility of liberation (nirvana) through the cessation of ignorance and craving.

Emphasis on Cause and Effect: This concept underscores the law of cause and effect (karma) in Buddhism, where actions (intentional deeds) create conditions for future experiences.

In summary, dependent origination is a profound teaching that helps practitioners understand the nature of reality, the origins of suffering, and the path to liberation through mindful awareness of the interconnectedness of all phenomena.

Krishna justifies the war in the Mahabharata as a necessary response to the prevalence of adharma (unrighteousness) in society. He emphasizes that it is the duty of righteous individuals to take action against evil, even if that action involves violence. In this context, the war is framed as a means to restore dharma (righteousness) and protect the innocent from the oppressive rule of Duryodhana, the primary antagonist. Krishna's perspective underscores the moral obligation to confront tyranny and injustice, positioning the conflict as essential for the greater good and the maintenance of moral order.

Violent people have the upper hand in society.

In the context of the Mahabharata, Krishna's justification for war highlights a critical moral dilemma: when adharma (unrighteousness) prevails, it becomes the duty of righteous individuals to act, even if that action involves violence. This perspective suggests that while violent individuals may appear to have the upper hand in society, it is essential for those committed to dharma (righteousness) to confront and challenge such tyranny.

Krishna advocates that the war against Duryodhana, the primary antagonist, is a necessary evil aimed at restoring moral order and protecting the innocent. This underscores the idea that in a society where violent and unjust forces dominate, the righteous must take a stand, even at the cost of engaging in conflict. Ultimately, Krishna's teachings suggest that true justice and righteousness require active resistance against those who misuse power, reinforcing the notion that the moral imperative to fight against evil is paramount, regardless of the apparent strength of the oppressors.

Krishna justifies violence for the sake of dharma.

Krishna justifies the war in the Mahabharata as a necessary response to the prevalence of adharma (unrighteousness) in society. He emphasizes that righteous individuals must take action against evil, even if that action involves violence. In this context, the war is framed as a means to restore dharma (righteousness) and protect the innocent from the oppressive rule of Duryodhana, the primary antagonist. Krishna's perspective underscores the moral obligation to confront tyranny and injustice, positioning the conflict as essential for the greater good and the maintenance of moral order.

It seems to be logical, that this philosophy of Krishna had developed over some time when docile non-violent Buddhists realised that violent people had the upper hand over them. Even now violent people dominate peaceful people. So violence is justified in extraordinary circumstances.

Other topics

Story of David in the bible

This one story puzzled me for a long time. The confusion arose because of a similarity with a Buddhist story in India. Read the story of **Bighau** (page 105 chapter XXXVII, book -the gospel of Buddha). (Carus, 2003) This story was told by Buddha to his disciples at the time of the first schism among his disciples.

Bighau was a prince son of King Dighiti, king of Kosala. Dighiti was defeated by King Brahmadatta, of Kasi. Kasi was a powerful kingdom and Dighiti could not withstand the onslaught of the king of Kasi. So the Dighiti fled from his kingdom and was living incognito in some nearby city.

One day the old king Dighiti was betrayed by his barber and Dighiti was executed. Before his death, Dighiti advised his son that hatred breeds more hatred and there is no end to violence if people take revenge on each other and the hatred will be passed to the next generations and generations to follow. But, this important lesson is missing in the David story.

After the death of his father Dighu took a job in the royal elephant stable and worked in the palace of of king of Kasi. The king of Kasi Brahma Datta could not sleep well and one day heard sweet music coming from his stable. On enquiry, he found that the musical instrument player was Dighau and Dighau became the musician in the palace of king. The story goes on like this and the story is very similar to the story of David.

The surprising part is that there are no proper details about the reasons for the conflict between David and King Saul. But, the real reason for hostility is explained in the story of Dighau.

But the essence of the story is hatred breeds more hatred and the only way to stop further violence and bloodshed is through forgiveness and love.

Surprisingly, many of us harbour hatred against brothers and other neighbours with whom we interact daily. Harboursing hatred leads to more suffering, so let us avoid hatred.

This similarity of story between Dighau and David must be studied in deep. Some research scholars should take up this assignment and conclude. What is the origin of the story, is it India or Israel?

Jesus lived in India.

Another topic interesting to me is the book “Jesus Lived in India” by “Holger Kersten”. (Kersten, 2001) There is a possibility Jesus could have lived in India and learned some Buddhist ideas in his childhood. Because many of the sayings are so esoteric and properly not explained. His teachings are like hidden gems, we have to search for them to properly understand his teachings. This will be an unifying factor between East and West.

Loneliness

Is it possible to live a lonely life? Sadhguru of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu says so. Yes, living alone brings me new reflections about life. But it may be very difficult. Because of the conditioning of the mind over million years of evolution. For example, a tiger lives alone in the forest but a lion lives a gregarious life, yet both are from the same cat family. Yet the million years of life had conditioned their mind differently. Man is a social animal (monkey) going against nature is an extraordinary thing and should be avoided.

But, somebody defeated in family life opts for an ascetic life. They are called “sanyasis” in India, they roam around the entire country with few dresses and living on alms. Yet, this may be an escape mechanism for a severely stressed man. After a period of roaming all over the country, they may return to normal life, yet continue with their ascetic way of life.

What is the support mechanism for these people? There are 14 Akharas in India. (Wikipedia) Aghara means a sect of the Hindu religion. They have their own Dhams (dhams means headquarters). Common people fund these sects, and these ashrams give free food and shelter to these vagabonds and these vagabonds settle in their lives after some period of roaming and realisation in life.

Loneliness is difficult for ordinary men, and such people should be supported by Sangha. Remember three basic principles of Buddhism.

Buddham saranam ghachami

Dharman saranam ghachami'

Sangham saranam ghachami

Sangham is essential for the Buddhist way of life or any society, for that matter. Sangham means any society where people come together for the common benefit of society; it is the opposite of the individualistic idea of a capitalistic society. This idea of rejecting a capitalistic way of life and promoting a cooperative way of life is supported by Ricard Mathieu in his book. ([*Happiness: A guide to developing life's most important skill*](#)). Read this book for more information. (Ricard)

Essentiality of sangha

Buddha did not bother about creating a sangha, but his followers only created the sangha to preserve the ideas of Buddha and perpetuate the ideas. It also provides security and

support to Buddhists. Similarly, a church supports Christians, without this kind of institutional support, the religion will fade away.

Co-operative way of life.

The Indian government tried to promote cooperatives, but many cooperative societies failed, but cooperative officers survived. That is the contrast of this failure. However, few exceptions exist, like Amul Cooperative.

The French Buddhist monk Ricard Mathieu (Ricard, 2015) supports the need for a cooperative way of life, like the “kibbutz” of Israelis. I also feel that capitalism is highly exploitative and unstable and a cooperative way of life should be promoted.

Reincarnation (rebirth)

Surprisingly, Tibetan Buddhism believes in reincarnation. Buddha proposed the idea of “no soul” (Anatta). “Shunya theory” as explained by Shankaracharya. But Tibetan Buddhism still retains the idea of reincarnation. It is quite contrary to the idea of “no soul”. This is the problem with the dogmatic way of interpretation you have to follow all the ideas, which come with a religion in a package, some ideas are good, and some are not so good. Dalai Lama had no choice other than following the entire package, he had to fit in the idea of reincarnation somewhere. There is no possibility of deleting the doubtful ideas. This is the problem of the dogmatic approach and this is where religious schism begins.

If you frequently delete the ideas, the original teaching will be also lost. The best way is to retain it, with an explanation, so that people can avoid the pitfalls.

Why Buddha suggested begging for survival

(AI generated answer)

The Buddha's practice of begging, or alms-begging, holds deep significance in Buddhism. Here are some key reasons why the Buddha insisted on this practice:

1. ****Humility and Detachment****: Begging for alms teaches humility and detachment from material possessions. It helps monks and nuns cultivate a sense of humility and reliance on the generosity of others, which is essential for spiritual growth.

2. ****Community Interdependence****: Alms-begging fosters a sense of interdependence between the monastic community and laypeople. It allows laypeople to practice generosity and gain merit by supporting the monastic community.

3. ****Focus on Spiritual Practice****: By relying on alms for sustenance, monks and nuns can focus entirely on their spiritual practice without the distractions of earning a livelihood.

4. ****Symbol of Renunciation****: The act of begging symbolizes the renunciation of worldly life and the commitment to a life of spiritual discipline and simplicity.

5. ****Teaching and Connection****: Alms rounds provide opportunities for monks and nuns to interact with laypeople, share teachings, and strengthen the spiritual community.

The practice of alms-begging is a profound expression of the Buddha's teachings on humility, generosity, and spiritual dedication.

But, begging is prohibited by law in modern India, yet you see a lot of beggars in India. That is the difference between law and practice. It may be prohibited by law but Hindu and Buddhist customs allow it.

Reference:

www.Wisdomlib.com

[https:// en. thaythichtructhamia.com](https://en.thaythichtructhamia.com)

(Thay Thich Truc Thai Minh was born Vu Minh Hieu on March 3, 1967, in Bac Ninh province, Vietnam. Currently, he is the abbot of Ba Vang Pagoda.)

Social boycott

(AI generated)

A "social boycott" is a form of ostracism where a person or group is deliberately avoided or excluded by other members of society. This collective refusal to engage with the individual or group in social and commercial relations aims to make them feel so uncomfortable that they voluntarily leave the community.

Social boycotts can be based on various factors, including caste, religion, political beliefs, or personal behaviour. They can manifest in different ways, such as preventing someone from participating in social or religious customs, denying access to community facilities, or refusing to interact with them in daily activities.

In India, the "Social Boycott Prevention Act" was enacted to address this issue. The act defines social boycotts and provides legal measures to prevent and penalize such practices.

Buddha tried to educate **Channa** his charioteer in many ways but he failed to learn the idea of “Nirvana”. Instead of learning Buddhist ideas, he always revelled in his old connection to Buddha as his charioteer from childhood onwards.

To overcome the problem, buddha directed his disciples to use a social boycott as an instrument to direct his attention towards learning Buddhism. Later, his disciples used this weapon and it worked. Channa also became an enlightened man after Buddha's death.

Thus buddha used this “social Boycott” as a teaching method to educate his charioteer after his death. But this is a legally prohibited practice now. In the same way “begging” is also prohibited in the modern law of India but it was an important survival and learning technique used by Buddha.

In modern family relationships also we use this social boycott method as a tool, to teach the recalcitrant member of family or society to bring them into a normal path. For example, a drunkard is often ostracised by society or family as a method to reform him or teach others as a bad example. It works very well but this method is often in subtle form and you don't realise such a pressure is being enforced on you.

Life is full of experiments.

Life is a continuous journey of learning and growth. Every experience, whether a success or a failure, teaches us something valuable. Embracing this mindset allows us to be more open to new opportunities and challenges, and to view setbacks as stepping stones rather than obstacles.

Experimenting and trying new things can lead to unexpected discoveries and personal development. It's all about being curious, resilient, and willing to learn from every situation.

My experiment with omelette

After completing my college education, I started my life in a small flat in the year 1988 in New Delhi. My first experiment with cooking was making an omelette and the experiment utterly failed. After that experiment, I did not make any attempt at cooking till I retired from service. That was only after completing the age of 60 after a 30-year gap, I started the experiment of cooking again.

One remarkable fact is that whenever I start making omelettes now, the old lessons at New Delhi crop up in my mind. A series of warnings comes into my mind about the mistakes of making an omelette and the correct omelette comes up in the pan. This experience I am just narrating to remember the power of practical learning. There is no use in reading many instruction books on “how to meditate?” the only way to learn meditation is to practice it.

Meditation as psychotherapy

My point is that the Buddhist practice of meditation is helping in reducing stress and various other psychological ailments. Why not take the meditation practice as one of the psychotherapy and help people? In fact, that is the reason for the popularity of meditation.

Meditation has increasingly been recognized as a valuable tool in psychotherapy. Here are some key points on how meditation is used in this context:

1. “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)”: Developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, MBSR is a structured program that incorporates mindfulness meditation to help individuals manage stress, anxiety, and chronic pain.

2. “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)”: This approach combines traditional cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques with mindfulness practices. It is effective in preventing relapse in individuals with recurrent depression.

3. “Emotional Regulation”: Meditation helps individuals develop better emotional regulation by increasing awareness of their thoughts and feelings. This can lead to improved coping strategies and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.

4. “Neurobiological Effects”: Studies have shown that meditation can lead to changes in brain structure and function, such as increased activity in areas associated with positive emotions and decreased activity in areas related to stress and anxiety.

5. “Integration with Traditional Therapy”: Meditation can be integrated with various therapeutic approaches, including psychoanalytic and cognitive-behavioural therapies, to enhance their effectiveness.

Meditation offers a holistic approach to mental health, promoting overall well-being and resilience. If you're interested in exploring this further, there are many resources and programs available that incorporate meditation into therapeutic practices.

Is it possible to live in a world of love and compassion

Living in a world filled with love and compassion is certainly an ideal worth striving for. It is a utopian idea. While the world may not always reflect these values, it's possible to create pockets of

such environments through individual and collective actions. Here are some ways to cultivate love and compassion:

Self-Compassion: Start with yourself. Practice self-compassion by being kind to yourself in moments of failure or difficulty. This self-love can radiate outward.

Mindfulness and Empathy: Engage in mindfulness practices to increase your awareness and empathy towards others. Understanding someone's perspective can foster compassion.

Acts of Kindness: Small acts of kindness, like helping a neighbour or volunteering, can make a big difference and inspire others to do the same.

Positive Communication: Promote love and compassion through positive communication. Listening actively and speaking kindly can build stronger, more compassionate relationships.

Education and Advocacy: Advocate for social justice, equality, and human rights. Education about different cultures, perspectives, and experiences can reduce prejudice and increase compassion.

Community Building: Create and participate in communities that prioritize love, respect, and support for each other.

While we can't control the actions of everyone, each of us has the power to influence our immediate surroundings. By embodying love and compassion, we can inspire others and gradually contribute to a more loving and compassionate world.

There is love and affection in this world but violent people have the upper hand.

It's true that violence and negativity can sometimes overshadow the love and compassion that exist in the world. However, it's important to remember that acts of kindness,

empathy, and understanding often go unnoticed but have a profound impact on individuals and communities.

By focusing on positive actions and fostering a culture of compassion, we can counteract the influence of violence. Every small act of kindness contributes to a larger movement towards a more loving and peaceful world.

What are the teachings of Bhagwat Gita?

The Bhagavad Gita explores the relationship between superconsciousness and consciousness, emphasizing the journey towards self-realization and enlightenment. It teaches that the superconscious mind, often associated with higher states of awareness and spiritual insight, can guide and elevate ordinary consciousness. This aligns with the idea that understanding one's true self leads to a more profound existence, as highlighted by various psychological frameworks, including Maslow's theories on self-actualization.

In the Bhagavad Gita, consciousness is a central theme that is intricately woven into the philosophical and spiritual teachings of the text. Here are the key aspects of the concept of consciousness as presented in the Gita:

Atman (Self): The Gita teaches that the true essence of an individual is the Atman, which is the eternal, unchanging self. It is distinct from the physical body and the mind, representing pure consciousness.

Three Gunas: The text discusses the three qualities (gunas) of nature—Sattva (goodness), Rajas (passion), and Tamas (ignorance)—that influence human behaviour and consciousness. A balanced or elevated state of Sattva leads to higher

consciousness, while the dominance of Rajas and Tamas can obscure true awareness.

Karma and Dharma: Consciousness in the Gita is also tied to action (karma) and duty (dharma). It emphasizes performing one's duty with a sense of detachment, which helps elevate consciousness and align it with divine principles.

Meditation and Self-Realization: The Gita advocates for meditation (dhyana) as a means to transcend ordinary consciousness and connect with the universal consciousness. Through meditation, one can go beyond the mind and realize the unity of Atman with Brahman (the ultimate reality).

Equanimity: Krishna teaches that a person with a steady mind, who remains unattached to success or failure, can achieve a state of higher consciousness. This state of equanimity allows one to perceive reality more clearly, beyond dualities.

Divine Vision: The Gita describes the concept of divine vision (divya drishti), where a practitioner, through disciplined practice and surrender to God, can see beyond the physical realm and experience higher spiritual truths.

In summary, consciousness in the Bhagavad Gita is multifaceted, encompassing the journey of realizing one's true self, understanding the nature of reality, and achieving spiritual liberation. The teachings encourage individuals to cultivate a higher state of awareness through self-awareness, duty, and devotion.

Maslow's theory of self-realization

Maslow's theory on self-realization is predominantly encapsulated in his concept of self-actualization, which he describes as the highest level of psychological development in his hierarchy of needs. Here are the key points regarding self-actualization according to Maslow:

Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow proposed a five-tier hierarchy of needs, often depicted as a pyramid, the first one is Physiological Needs, Basic physical requirements (food, water, shelter).

The second need is Safety, Security, stability, and freedom from fear. The third need is Love and Belongingness; Social needs like relationships, love, and belonging.

The fourth need is Esteem; The need for self-esteem, respect, and recognition. The fifth need is Self-Actualization; The realization of one's potential, personal growth, self-fulfilment, and peak experiences.

Definition of Self-Actualization:

Self-actualization refers to the desire to become the most that one can be. It's about realizing personal potential and seeking personal growth and peak experiences. People who are self-actualized feel fulfilled and have a greater sense of purpose.

Characteristics of Self-Actualized Individuals; According to Maslow, self-actualized people often exhibit certain traits, including the first character Autonomy which is Independent thinking and behaviour.

The second characteristic is Purpose; which means A clear focus on their goals and values. The third character is Realism; A realistic approach to life and acceptance of themselves and others.

The fourth character is Problem-Solving; The ability to prioritize problems outside themselves and get things done. The fifth character is Acceptance; Acceptance of themselves and others as they are. The fifth and last character is Continued Growth; A desire for continued personal development and a willingness to embrace new experiences.

Peak Experiences:

Maslow also talked about "peak experiences," which are profound moments of happiness and fulfilment that often accompany self-actualization. These experiences can lead to increased insights, creativity, and a deeper understanding of life.

Path to Self-Actualization:

Self-actualization is seen as a lifelong process that involves personal exploration, the confrontation of self-limitations, and the pursuit of personal goals. It requires fulfilling lower-level needs first before one can truly focus on self-actualization.

In essence, Maslow's theory emphasizes that self-actualization is about the pursuit of personal growth, authenticity, and the realization of one's potential. It underscores that true fulfilment comes not from external achievements alone but from inner development and understanding of one's place in the broader context of existence.

Lesson from House Sparrow

The house sparrow population in India has declined due to various factors. The first reason is the Habitat loss, Modern architecture, such as flats with sleek walls, has eliminated the old houses with roofs and holes that sparrows used to nest in. The second reason is Food scarcity, The use of insecticides and pesticides has eliminated the tiny insects that were a major part of the sparrow's diet.

The third reason is the Lack of nesting spaces, The growth of the human population has changed the way people live, reducing the number of places for sparrows to nest and breed.

The fourth reason is Pollution, Pollution from microwave towers and pesticides, as well as noise and gaseous pollutants from automobiles, can deter sparrows.

The fifth reason is Electromagnetic radiation, The increase in electromagnetic radiation from cell phone towers and other wireless devices can disturb the sparrows' ability to navigate.

The sixth reason is Big birds, Big birds like pigeons and crows have taken over the small places in which sparrow build their nests.

In my view, All the reasons given above may be partially correct but one of the main reasons is one species of bird called "seven sisters" is responsible for the decline of house sparrows.

The correct name of "Seven Sisters" is Jungle Babblers (scientific name: *Argya striata*). They are commonly found in the Indian subcontinent and are known for foraging in small groups of six to ten birds, which has given them the popular name "Seven Sisters" in urban Northern India.

Regarding their replacement of house sparrows, it's important to note that Common Mynas (not Seven Sisters) have been observed to be replacing house sparrows in urban areas. (Rajah Jayapal., 2022) This is likely due to competition for nesting space and resources. The expanding urban population of Common Mynas raises concerns about their impact on other urban bird species, including house sparrows.

The above-mentioned research paper says mynas are the real culprit, not jungle babblers. But what I have seen in my house is practically that the 'seven sisters' had taken over the living space of 'house sparrows'. It has profound survival implications.

The house sparrows live in pairs only husband and wife, whereas the seven sisters live in groups of six to ten and they easily overcome the house sparrows for living space and feeding material.

Similarly, if you are living alone, you will be easily overthrown by rowdy neighbours. If you live in a group, your chances of survival are high. So try to maintain a group, which is progressive at the same time supportive of you.

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